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The Christian's Pattern:

OR, A

TREATISE

OF THE

IMITATION

OF

Jesus Christ.

In Four BOOKS.

Written Originally in LATIN by

THOMAS à KEMPIS.

Now Render'd into ENGLISH.

To which are added,

Meditations and Prayers,

FOR

SICK PERSONS.

By *GEORGE STANHOPE*, D. D.
Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

The Second Edition.

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With Additions.

To the Honoured

Mrs. *Julia Shalcroſſe*,

OF

Hatfield Woodhall, in *Hertfordſhire*.

MADAM,

IT is not meerly from an Ambition to make the moſt publick Profeſſion of my Gratitude, that I take the Confidence of preſenting You with this Book; but becauſe I apprehend it, in a peculiar manner, ſuitable to your Circumſtances, and qualified for a favourable Acceptance. The conſtant Strain of Piety, which animates the whole Compoſition, will not fail to recommend it to ſo Excellent and Devout a Perſon: And the many moving Reflections upon Afflicted Virtue are ſo exactly calculated for thoſe Tryals, which the Divine Providence (always Wiſe and Good) hath thought fit to exerciſe you with; that, as they paſſed under my Pen, they frequently brought You into my Thoughts: You, Madam, who have ſo great Occaſion for, ſo juſt a Title to, thoſe true Comforts adminiſtred here. For indeed the only True Comforts in Trouble, are ſuch as Religion ſupplies Men with. And Thoſe (Madam) are ſo powerful, that I

cannot but promiſe my ſelf, You will taſte the ſweet Refreſhments they bring, if theſe Meditations ſhall be allowed the Privilege of bearing you Company in your moſt melancholy Retirements.

My Deſign in Publiſhing this Book, as it now appears, was to recommend, and render it ſerviceable to all Chriſtian Readers in general. But among Them there is not Any, in contributing to whoſe Benefit and Satisfaction I ſhould eſteem my Labours more ſucceſſfully anſwered, than to Yours. Who have by ſo many Inſtances of Goodneſs obliged me to be with all poſſible Sincerity and Reſpect,

MADAM,

Your moſt affectionate Couſin,

and moſt humble Servant,

GEO. STANHOPE.

THE

THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

THE Reputation of this Little Book, with which the Reader is here presented, seems abundantly established, by the great Pains taken to communicate it to Mankind, in most Languages of the Christian World. But since the *English* Version hitherto in use, was in some places grown obsolete, and in many fell short of that Life and Spirit requisite for such Devotional Tracts, it was thought expedient to recommend it by a Style more modern, and a little better suited to Subjects of this Nature.

In this Attempt the *Latin* of *Castellio* is chiefly followed; He hath taken some liberty in places peculiarly relating to the *Romish* Superstitions. And the present Translator hath not only trodden in his Steps thus far; but, in the Chapters which concern a Monkish Life particularly, hath endeavoured so to express himself for the most part, as that such Meditations might be accommodated to the Circumstances of any Pious Christian,

who declines the Pleasures and Business and other Interruptions of the World; and sequesters himself to the Exercise of Devotion and severer Virtue.

This was thought most agreeable to the great Design he had in view, That of rendring these Reflections of general Use to the World. For which reason also, he hath not been nicely close in many of the Flights usual with these Contemplative and Mystical Divines. Thinking it better, either to give those Rapturous Passages another Turn; or, by Additions and Illustrations of his own, to bring them down to the common Condition of Humane Life, and fit them for the Mouths of every Sincere Practical Christian.

In order to preserve the Zeal and Spirit of the Author, it was found necessary, sometimes to abridge, and at others to enlarge a Thought, and carry it a little higher. All which the Reader hath this Warning of, to prevent any Objections which might otherwise be raised against the Faithfulness of an Undertaking; Intended, not so much to acquaint *English* Men what *Kempis* thought; as to convey those Thoughts with some degree of that Sprightliness and affectionate Warmth which the Original Composer at first felt from them.

And because the Reader will perhaps expect some Account of Him, here follows in brief the Substance of what *Rosweid* hath delivered concerning him.

"This *Thomas* was called *à Kempis* from a lit-
"tle Village of that Name, in the Dioceſe of
"*Cologne*, where he was born in the Year of our
"Lord 1380. His Parentage and Fortune were
"mean; At Thirteen Years old he began his
"Studies, and about Nineteen betook himſelf to
"a Monaſtery of *Auguſtine* Monks; About Five
"and twenty he took the Habit of that Houſe
"and Order. There he continued for the ſpace
"of Seventy Years, particularly eminent for his
"Piety, Humility, diligent Study of the Holy
"Scriptures, Auſterity of Life, moving Eloquence
"in Diſcourſe, and extraordinary Zeal in Prayer.
"For his Perſon, He was of middle Stature, of
"a ſtrong brown Complexion, a lively piercing
"Eye; and a Sight ſo good, that though he
"laboured much under other Infirmities of old
"Age, yet he was never reduced to the uſe of
"Spectacles. He dyed *July* 25, 1471. in the
"Ninety ſecond Year of his Age.

As to the Diſpute, whether this Book were of his Compoſition, I am content to ſubmit to common Fame, and leave him in quiet poſſeſſion, not ſeeing of what conſequence it can be, to call his Title in queſtion, or examine into the Merits of other Pretenders.

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Book 2 page 1

OF THE IMITATION OF Jesus Christ.

The First Book.

CHAP. I.

Of the Contempt of the Vanities of the World.

HE *that followeth me, shall not walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life*, says that Christ, who declares himself *the Light of the World*. The true Importance and Design of which Words is doubtless to instruct us, that the Way to be truly Enlightned, and to deliver our selves from all Blindness of Heart, is to make His Holy Life the Object of our Imitation, and to form our Dispositions and Actions upon the perfect Model of that bright Example. But how shall we follow a Pattern, which we but little think of? And therefore the first Step toward thus Copying after him, is the employing our Thoughts, with great Frequency and serious Attention, upon the Perfections of this Divine Original. John viii. 12.

2. The

2. The Doctrin taught by Christ, excels all the Instructions delivered to Mankind by all the Holy Men that ever lived; and every Man, endued with a true Christian Spirit, will not fail there to find a hidden Manna, like that of old, fitted both to nourish, and minister Delight to his Soul. The true Account then of Mens hearing the Gospel, without any sensible Relish, or eager Desire, is, that they are not endued with the Spirit of Christ: This is a Treasure found of Them only who desire to find it; and a Man must resolve and endeavour to form his whole Conversation upon the Principles of that Doctrin, before he can attain to a full Understanding of its Excellence, and feel an inward Satisfaction in the Study of it.

3. And here indeed lies the true Benefit of Meditation and Knowledge. For, without This, how poor and unprofitable a thing is Speculation? What is a Man the better for entring into the Sublime Mysteries of the Trinity, and being able to Dispute nicely upon that adorable Union, if in the mean while he want that Meekness and Humility, without which he must needs lie under the Displeasure of the Trinity? Certain it is, that Distinctions and Notions, though never so subtle or serviceable to the Truth, do not make a Man Just and Holy: But a careful and conscientious Life recommends us to the Favour and Love of God. I had rather be affected with a true penitent Sorrow for Sin, than be able to resolve the most difficult Cases about it. Suppose you had all the Bible faithfully treasured up in your Memory, and a perfect Comprehension of all the Moral Philosophy in the World: To what purpose serves this mighty Stock of Rules, if not drawn out into Use by Charity, and seconded by Divine Grace? *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity*, said the Preacher: and his Observation admits of that single Exception only, taken notice of in the Conclusion of his Book, *Love God, and keep his Commandments, for this*

is the Whole of Man. He who would approve himself Wise in good earnest, must first by a just Contempt of this World, raise himself up to the Desires and Endeavours after the Kingdom of Heaven. Ch. xii. 13.

4. Vanity most certainly it is, with great Solicitude to seek, and place our Hope and Confidence in, Riches, which are sure to perish. Vanity, to cherish our Ambition, and strive, by all possible means, to attain a high and honourable Station. Vanity, to indulge the Desires of the Flesh, and court those Pleasures, which draw after them grievous and lasting Pains. Vanity most exquisite, to be infinitely concerned for living long, and perfectly indifferent, or but coldly affected, concerning living well. Vanity most fatal and stupid, to determine our Thoughts and Cares to this Life present, and never look forward to that which is to come: To dote upon things that fly swiftly from us, and cling fast about imaginary and transitory Delights; while we suffer our selves by these to be detained and diverted from the Pursuit of substantial and eternal Joys.

5. Oh! turn this Vehemence of Desire upon the right Object, and remember, to how little purpose it is placed on that which cannot give Content; since most true is that Observation, which ought to make us wiser, *The Eye is not satisfied with Seeing, nor the Ear filled with Hearing.* Use then thy utmost Diligence to wean thy Soul from the *Love of the Things that are seen,* and *set thy Affections on Things that are not seen.* For, be assured, that they who follow their own sensual Appetites, do lose, not only their Labour and Expectation, but their Innocence and Purity, the Peace of their own Conscience, and the Favour of Almighty God. Eccles. i. 8.

Chap. II.

Modesty.

THe Desire of Knowledge is natural to every Man; but what Advantage is it to be knowing, if that Knowledge be not seasoned with Virtue and Religion? The vilest Peasant, and he, whom we in scorn think least removed from Brute, if he serve God according to the best of his mean Capacity, is yet a better and more valuable Man, than the proudest Philosopher, who busies himself in considering the Motions of the Heavens, but bestows no Reflection at all upon those of his own Mind. The certain Consequence of knowing a Man's self truly, is a mean Opinion of himself, and not being exalted with the Commendations of other People. And, supposing my Knowledge so vast and extensive, that nothing this World contains were hid from it, yet what would all this avail me in the sight of God, who, when he comes to Judgment, will try me upon the Issue, not of what I have known, but what I have done?

2. Restrain that extream Desire of increasing Learning, which at the same time does but increase Sorrow, by involving the Mind in much Perplexity and false Delusion. For such are fond of being thought Men of Wisdom, and respected as such: And yet this boasted Learning of theirs consists in many things, which a Man's mind is very little, if at all, the better for the knowledge of. And sure, whatever they may think of the matter, he, who bestows his Time and Pains upon things, that are of no service for promoting the Happiness of his Soul, ought by no means to be esteemed a wise Man. Words and Notions give no inward Satisfaction; but a virtuous Life never fails to comfort and refresh the Mind, and to minister the best Antidote against

againſt all manner of Difficulties; for ſuch is a good Conſcience, and a well-grounded *Confidence towards God*, which is its inſeparable Attendant. 1 John iii. 21.

3. The more a Man knows, and the better thoſe Subjects are, upon which his Studies have been employed, the heavier ſhall his Account be, unleſs his Piety and Virtue be proportionably eminent and exemplary. So little reaſon have we to be exalted with our Attainments; and not rather to fear more, as we improve more in Knowledge. And what Improvements indeed can poſſibly be ſo great, as to juſtifie our being proud of them? For no Man can ever want this Mortification of his Vanity, That what he knows, is but a very little, in compariſon of what he ſtill continues ignorant of. Conſider this, and, inſtead of boaſting thy Knowledge of a few Things, confeſs and be out of Countenance for the many more which thou doſt not underſtand. And why ſo forward to prefer thy ſelf before others, when there are ſo many Perſons, whoſe Learning and Skill in the Rules of Living, give them an undoubted Right to be preferr'd before You? If you would attain to uſeful Learning indeed; learn to conceal your Attainments, and be content that the World ſhould think meanly of you: For Lowlineſs of Mind, and not thinking of a Man's ſelf *more highly than he ought to think*, is the moſt difficult, but withal the moſt profitable Leſſon; and the preferring others before our ſelves, is a Point of true Wiſdom and high Perfection. Nor ought our Opinions of this kind be changed, though we ſhould ſee another guilty of ſome egregious Folly, or very grievous Wickedneſs; ſince we our ſelves are Men of like Paſſions and Frailties; nor can we tell how long our own Virtue may continue unſhaken. Remember then, that Infirmities are common to all Mankind; and ſo remember it, as to perſwade your ſelf, or at leaſt to ſuſpect, that theſe are

dealt to Thee in as plentiful a meaſure, as to any other Perſon whatſoever.

Chap. III.

The Doctrine of Truth.

BLeſſed is the Man, whom Truth condeſcends to Teach; not by dark Figures, and Words quickly forgotten, but by a full and familiar Communication of it ſelf. Happy ſhould we be, could we but ſee things as they are, free from the Errors of our fond Opinions, and the falſe Eſtimates we form from thence. How high a Value do we ſet upon the Knack of Diſtinguiſhing and Diſputing nicely, in Matters hid from common Apprehenſions; but Matters too, which to know nothing of, will not render a Man's Caſe one whit the worſe at the Day of Judgment? Egregious and elaborate Folly! which overlooks uſeful and neceſſary Points, as things not worthy our Regard; and bends our Induſtry to find out thoſe, which either turn to no Account, or what is worſe than none. Thus taking Pains to be Ignorant at laſt, and verifying, in our own ſelves, the Prophet's Deſcription of the Heathen Idols, which *have Eyes*, and yet *ſee not*.

Pſal. xciv. 12.

Pſalm cxv.

Why ſhould we then, with ſuch eager Toil, ſtrive to be Maſters of Logical Definitions, or what do our abſtracted Speculations profit us? He, whom the Eternal Word inſtructs, takes a much ſhorter Cut to Truth: For from this Word alone are all things; In This they center and conſpire; and this is the true Principle of Knowledge, without which no Man underſtands or judges any thing aright. But he, who reduces all to One Principle, and in that one diſcerns all

all things, may eſtabliſh his Mind in perfect Peace, and reſt himſelf ſecurely upon God. O Thou whoſe very Eſſence is Truth, unite me to thy ſelf in perfect Love! The Variety of Subjects tire and diſtract my Soul; in Thee alone I find the Sum of all my Wiſhes and Deſires. Let all our Teachers be for ever Dumb, and this great Volume of the Creatures continue ſhut to me; ſo Thou vouchſafe thy more immediate Information, and teach me by thy ſelf alone.

The better acquainted any Man is with himſelf, the more he converſes with, and retires in his own Breaſt; and the leſs he wanders abroad, and dwells upon things without him, the more extenſive and ſublime is his Knowledge, and the eaſier attained; becauſe this Man receives immediate Illumination, and is directed by a Ray darted from Heaven into his Soul. A Mind ſincere, and pure, and firm, is not diverted by Multiplicity of Objects; for the Honour of God is its conſtant Aim; and having but one End to purſue, it is in perfect Peace and Unity with it ſelf, and does not divide its Thoughts with Vanity and Self-love. For what can be a greater Hindrance than our own ambitious and ungoverned Paſſion? A truly good and pious Man firſt orders and diſpoſes all his Buſineſs regularly, before he enters upon the Execution of any Deſign: He ſuffers no vicious Inclination to divert him, but makes every Undertaking ſubmit to the Dictates of Reaſon and Religion. The ſharpeſt as well as nobleſt Conflict is that wherein we labour to gain a Conqueſt over our ſelves; and this ſhould be our principal and conſtant Care, to get ground every Day, by bringing our Paſſions more and more under, and becoming more maſterly Proficients in Virtue and Goodneſs.

Nor may we ſuppoſe any ſo exalted Degree of Virtue, that it ſhould ceaſe to be a State of Proficiency; for ſuch is the Condition of Mortals, that their utmoſt poſſible Perfection in this Life is ever embaſed with an

Allay of Imperfection, and their brighteſt Notions clouded with ſome Confuſion and Obſcurity: But in the Study of our ſelves we are beſt capable of avoiding Miſtakes; and therefore a true Senſe of what we are, and that Humility, which cannot but proceed from ſuch a Senſe, is a ſurer Way of bringing us to God, than the moſt laborious and profound Enquiries after Knowledge. Not that Learning is in its own Nature blameable, for the Underſtanding of any thing whatſoever, if conſidered ſimply, and as it really is, ought to be acknowledged commendable and good; the Gift and Ordinance of God; but the Danger is, when we give this the Precedence in our Eſteem, before things abundantly better, I mean, a good Conſcience, and a virtuous Converſation. The true Reaſon then, why, in an Age where Learning is had in univerſal Admiration, ſo little Proof is made; and both Error and Vice do, notwithſtanding, ſo wretchedly abound, is, in truth, no other than that Men generally miſtake their main Buſineſs and proper Excellence. They had rather cultivate their Parts than their Manners, and account it a greater Accompliſhment, to Know much, than to Live well.

Oh! would Men but beſtow half the Pains in rooting out Vice and planting Virtue in its ſtead, which they are content to throw away upon captious and unprofitable Queſtions, and that *Oppoſition of Science, falſly ſo called*, what a bleſſed Reformation ſhould we ſee? Then would not the Vulgar, and meaner Sort, abandon themſelves to ſuch ſcandalous, brutiſh, and abominable Wickedneſs; nor would the Men of Senſe, and Learning, and Quality, continue ſo profligate and diſſolute in their Manners, and blemiſh, as they do, their Honour and Attainments, with ſhameleſs and licentious Impurities. Surely this could not be, did Men but conſider at all, that a Day of Judgment there will come, wherein Meaſures

1 Tim. iv. 20.

ſures will be taken very different from ours; when the Enquiry, upon which our Affairs muſt all turn, will be, not how much we have Heard or Read, but how much we have Done; not how Eloquent our Expreſſions, but how Pure and Devout our Lives; how much our Manners, not our Capacity or Breeding, our Wit or Rhetorick, diſtinguiſhed us from common Men. But, if the Credit and Honour of the thing were the only Conſideration, yet even thus, Where is the Fruit of all this mighty Toil? What is become of all the eminent Divines, Philoſophers, Lawyers, Orators, Perſons celebrated far and near, juſt at the time when they lived and flouriſhed; but now ſome body elſe enjoys the Gains of all that Learning and Fatigue; and 'tis odds, whether he that lives after their Labours, ever ſo much as ſends one Thought after them. Theſe Men, ſo eminent in their reſpective Profeſſions, no doubt, thought themſelves conſiderable in their own time; but now that time is gone, and they are loſt in univerſal Silence. Their very Names buried as deep as their Bodies; and the one was ſcarce ſooner out of Sight, than the other out of all Mention and Remembrance.

Ah wretched Men! How have you been deluded? How ſhort and withering a Good does that Fame and Reputation prove, which you vainly promiſed your ſelves would be Eternal; always freſh and flouriſhing, always precious in the Mouths and Memories of Poſterity? But this, and no better, is the Condition of all worldly Honour. Oh! had you but been equally careful to improve in Piety, and rendred your Virtues as eminent as your Learning, your Studies then had not been Fruitleſs; but followed with a Recompence which would not thus have forſaken you. But This is the fatal Error of our Age, that infinite Numbers are deſtroyed by unprofitable Knowledge. They lay themſelves out upon Subtleties and Curioſities, which

turn to no Account; and the Only Thing, which can make them Amends at laſt, Religion and the Service of God, that they give themſelves no manner of Trouble about, but ſlight as not worth their Care or Thought. The great Occaſion of their fantaſtical Opinions, and dangerous Corruptions, with which the World is peſter'd, is certainly this, That Men propoſe no End of their Studies but to be Great, and to have other People think as highly of them, as they do of themſelves; And becauſe of all things, they deteſt Humility, and a Submiſſion to Truth, God gives them the due Reward of their Vanity, and ſuffers them to be ſeduced by their own Abſurdities and *Imaginations*. But if we would be Great, let us take the proper Courſe for it: For, None is truly ſo, but he that abounds in the Love of God, and in good Works; none is truly ſo, but he who thinks modeſtly of himſelf, and is got above the Temptations of Ambition and Vain-glory. The Man who is Wiſe to purpoſe is he who counts all that this World can boaſt of, but *Droſs and Dung, that he may win Chriſt*. And He is an expert and learned Man indeed, who hath learnt to give the Preference to God's Will, before his own; who reſolutely complies with his Commands, and as reſolutely denies his own Inclinations.

Rom. i. 21.

Phil. iii. 8.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Prudence in our Behaviour.

BE *not too haſty in believing every Word*, nor the Suggeſtions of *every Spirit*, but conſider coolly and leiſurely, and make a Conſcience of giving your Credit with due Caution. Men are much more prone (the greater is the Pity) both to ſpeak and believe ill than well of their Neighbours. This is our Infirmity and Unhappineſs: But a good Man will conſider and make Allowances for it: And the Effect of this Conſideration will be, the ſuſpending his Aſſent, and neither believing all he hears, nor officiouſly reporting all he believes. *Prov.* xiv. 15. 1 *John* iv. 1. *Eccluſ.* xix. 4.

It is an Argument of great Wiſdom, to do nothing raſhly; nor to be obſtinate and inflexible in our Opinions. And the Cautiouſneſs I juſt now recommended, in crediting and ſpreading Reports, is a neceſſary Branch of the ſame Perfection. Adviſe in your Affairs with wiſe and good Men; and think it more for your Reputation, to be inſtructed by thoſe who underſtand better, than to act upon your own Head. A virtuous Life makes a Man prudent in God's Eſteem, and gives true Conduct and Experience. The more humble and obſervant we are to His Directions, the better we ſhall behave our ſelves, and the greater Satisfaction and Peace of Mind we ſhall find reſulting from all we do. *James* iii. 2. *Eccluſ.* xix. 24.

Chap. V.

Of Reading the Holy Scriptures.

THe End we ſhould propoſe to our ſelves in this Study, is the diſcerning and diſcovery of Truth, not the obſerving Quaintneſs and Propriety of Expreſſion. That Book of God indeed ſhould be peruſed with the ſame Spirit and Temper by which it was dictated. And as the Holy Ghoſt intended the Profit of Mankind, more than Niceneſs of Words and Phraſes, ſo ſhould we aim at growing better Livers, rather than wiſer, or more accurate Speakers, by what he hath delivered. To Perſons thus diſpoſed, the plaineſt and moſt pious Parts of Scripture will miniſter a Delight, equal to thoſe which are more myſterious and ſublime. The Authority and Skill of the Pen-man ſhould be of little weight with us; nor matters it, whether he were one of great or mean Attainments; for the Love and Deſire of Truth is the proper Motive to Study; and the Subſtance of what is ſpoken, not the Perſon who ſpeaks, ought principally to be conſidered. *All Fleſh is Graſs, but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever*; and this Word ſpeaks to us in different manners, without any partial Reſpect of Perſons.

Rom. xv. 4. 1 *Cor.* ii. 1, 4.

1 Pet. i. 24, 25.

One great Inconvenience in Reading the Scripture, is our own vain Curioſity. We loſe much of the Benefit, which might otherwiſe be gathered from them, by pretending to nice Diſquiſitions of difficult Points; and labouring to bring to the Standard of our own imperfect Reaſon, what we ſhould be content to receive with the Simplicity of an humble Obedience, and place to the Account of Divine Faith. If you would Read then, and profit by that Reading, you muſt

muſt do it with a ſubmiſſive aud humble, a ſincere and teachable Diſpoſition of Mind; and account it a greater Excellence to believe what God hath ſaid, than to affect the Reputation of Learning, by Singularity of Opinions, and a bold Attempt to bring down all he ſays to your own Comprehenſion. If in ſome things you find occaſion to doubt or diſtruſt your own Judgment, conſult wiſe and holy Perſons, and ſubmit patiently to hear and be informed by them. Nor let a vain Conceit of your own Abilities produce Contempt of the Aphoriſms and Parables of the Ancients. For, be well aſſured, they were not uttered at all Adventures; but they who delivered theſe Proverbial Sentences, knew them to be the Reſult of long and judicious Obſervation. *Eccluſ.* viii. 8, 9.

Chap. VI.

Of Inordinate Affections.

THe Moment a Man cheriſhes any immoderate Deſire, he feels a Tempeſt riſing in his Soul. Pride and Covetouſneſs never ſuffers us to reſt; but the Poor and Lowly in Heart, the Humble and the Contented, enjoy themſelves in a profound and perpetual Calm. He that is ſtill in conflict with his Paſſions, and hath not yet attained a compleat Victory over them, is eaſily tempted, and often finds himſelf over-born by things not worth his Concern. For the Remains of a carnal Spirit, and the ſtrong Tendencies to Pleaſures of Senſe, will not ſuffer a Man, without great Difficulty, to draw his Mind off from worldly Affections. And therefore, while he is endeavouring to do this, he endeavours it with ſore Travel and Pain; commits a Violence upon himſelf, and is provoked to Anger and In-

Indignation againſt all that oppoſes him in ſo laborious an Undertaking.

But if he indulge thoſe Deſires, and ſucceed in them, the Conſequence is worſe this way than the other: For then he is ſtung with Remorſe for his guilty Compliance, and diſcontented to find, that the Gratifying his Inclination does not yield the Satisfaction he promiſed himſelf from it. This convinces him by ſad Experience, that true Peace and Content is never to be had by obeying his Appetites, but by an obſtinate Reſiſtance of them. And ſuch Peace cannot be expected in the Breaſt of any ſenſual Man; for it is the peculiar Portion and Happineſs of a Soul raiſed above the World, a zealous and devout, a mortified and refined, and heavenly Diſpoſition of Spirit.

Chap. VII.

Directions for avoiding Pride, and vain Confidences.

TO put our Truſt in Man, or in any other Creature, is moſt egregious Vanity. Think it not below you, to ſubmit to the meaneſt good Offices for the Service of your Brethren, and the Sake of Jeſus Chriſt; nor count it any Shame to be thought Poor and Mean in this World: Do your own Endeavour honeſtly, and faithfully, and never doubt of God's Aſſiſtance. Depend not upon your own Wiſdom, and place not any Confidence in the greateſt Man living; but let your whole Truſt reſt entirely upon the Favour of God, who bringeth down, and *reſiſteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble*, and *exalteth thoſe* who are content to *abaſe themſelves.*

Jer. xvii. 5.

Iſai. ix. 24.

1 Pet. iv. 5. Luke i. 52. xiv. 11.

Boaſt

Boaſt not of Riches, becauſe they are in your preſent poſſeſſion; Nor of Friends, becauſe they have Power and Intereſt; but if you will glory, glory in God, who is able to give all things, and willing to give, that which is better than all, even Himſelf. And why ſhould the Strength and Beauty of your Perſon puff you up with Pride, when it is in the Power of a very little Sickneſs, to bring upon you extream Weakneſs and odious Deformity. If you be inclined to value your Wit and Addreſs above due meaſure, remember from what Hand theſe come, and do not provoke the Giver by abuſing the Gift.

Fancy not your ſelf better than your Neighbours, for fear God, who knows what is in every Man, think the worſe of you upon that account. Nay, value not your ſelf even for what you have done well, for God judgeth not as Man judgeth; and what we often are highly ſatisfied with, he ſometimes thinks not fit ſo much as to approve. If you be conſcious of any thing good in your ſelf, think, that the ſame, or better Qualities may likewiſe be found in others: For while you allow their Excellencies, it will be no difficult matter to preſerve a modeſt Opinion of your own. There can come no Harm of ſuppoſing every other Man better than your ſelf, but the ſuppoſing any one Man worſe than your ſelf may be attended with very ill Conſequences. *The Meek*, ſays the Scripture, *is refreſhed in the multitude of Peace*; but the Proud in Spirit is *like a troubled Sea*, perpetually toſt and driven by the fierce Commotions of Anger, and Emulation, and Envy, and Diſdain, which never ſuffer him to be eaſie and compoſed.

Pſalm xxxvii. Iſai. lvii.

Chap.

Chap. VIII.

Againſt too general an Acquaintance, and inconvenient Freedoms in Converſation.

Open not thine Heart to every Man, but make choice of prudent and religious Perſons to diſcloſe thy Affairs to. Frequent not the Company of young Men and Strangers; Flatter not the Rich, neither affect to be ſeen in the Preſence of great Men: but aſſociate thy ſelf with the Devout, the Virtuous, the Humble; and contrive that thy Diſcourſe be profitable. Deſire not the intimate Acquaintance of Women; but, inſtead of thy Converſation, let them have thy Prayers: and recommend the Preſervation and the Reward of their Virtue to God. Converſe as much as may be with God, with his holy Angels, with thy one Conſcience; and complain not for want of Company, nor think it an Unhappineſs to have but few Acquaintance, when thou haſt ſo good Company as this always at hand. *Eccluſ.* viii. 19.

Our Charity indeed ſhould be univerſal and extend to all Mankind: but it is by no means convenient, our Friendſhips and Familiarities ſhould do ſo too. We often find, that a Perſon altogether unknown to us, comes recommended by a good Character, which makes us paſſionately fond of his Acquaintance; and yet this very Man, when better known, loſes the great Opinion we conceived of him before, and grows palled and flat upon our Hands. And this we may be ſure is no leſs likely to prove our own Caſe: For the Perſons with whom we hope to ingratiate our ſelves by a freer Acquaintance, frequently diſcover ſome ill Quality in us, which makes us leſs acceptable. And therefore, in Prudence and Tenderneſs to our ſelves and others both, we ſhould be ſparing in our Intimacies;

cies; becauſe it ſo very often happens, that the more perfectly Men are underſtood, the leſs they are eſteemed.

Chap. IX.

Obedience and a State of Subjection.

IT is a very valuable Advantage to live under the Direction of a Superior, and, whatever the Generality of Men think of the matter, more difficult and hazardous to Command, than to Obey. Many ſubmit, more out of Neceſſity, than out of any Principle of Duty or Choice; And, to ſuch as theſe, this is a State of continual Torment. All they do is againſt the Grain, attended with conſtant Murmurings and Complaints; The Life of Slaves and Brutes, and not of Men, who ſhould act with a Spirit of Freedom. And this Native Liberty no Inferior attains to, till he have learnt to Obey heartily, for God's, and Conſcience ſake. Whatever Poſt you form an Idea of, none will give you Quiet and inward Content, equal with that of a State of Subjection: Many have fed themſelves with fond Imaginations, how happy they ſhould be, if they could change their Condition for a higher; but few, if any, who have actually made the Experiment, have found themſelves at all the happier or eaſier for it.

'Tis true indeed, every Man's own Judgment is the proper Rule and Meaſure of his Actions; and hence it comes to paſs, that we are all beſt affected to them, who are of the ſame Opinions with our ſelves. But 'tis as true, that if God rule in our Hearts, we ſhall not think much to recede from our own Senſe in ſome Caſes, when Peace and the Publick Good may be promoted

moted by ſuch Conceſſions. For who is ſo abſolutely and compleatly Wiſe, that nothing eſcapes his Knowledge? If then our Knowledge be but partial and imperfect, 'tis but reaſonable, we ſhould not abound too much in our own Senſe, but allow a fair Hearing at leaſt to thoſe who differ from us. And in ſuch Caſes a Man gains a great Point, when he knows himſelf in the right, and yet, in Tenderneſs and Charity, can comply with the Infirmities or Miſtakes of others, rather than offend God, by being too tenacious of his own better Judgment.

I have frequently been told, That it is much ſafer to take Advice, than to give it. For a Man may have conſidered and determined well; and yet there may be ſome Caſes, which may make it reaſonable to depart from that Determination, and give our ſelves up to be determined by other Perſons. And when theſe Caſes happen, To refuſe ſuch Compliances, manifeſtly betrays our own Self-conceit; and is not Conſtancy, but Obſtinacy of Spirit.

Chap. X.

Few Words are beſt.

Decline Crowds and Company as much as conveniently you may. For frequent Diſcourſe, even of News or indifferent Things, which happens upon ſuch Occaſions, is ſometimes an Obſtruction to Virtue, when leaſt intended or ſuſpected ſo to be. The World and its Vanities eaſily take hold of us, and our Minds are enſnared and captivated, before we are aware. How often have I found reaſon to wiſh, that I had not been in Company, or that I had ſaid nothing, when I was there? If we examine, how it comes to paſs, that

that Mutual Converſation gives ſo great Delight, notwithſtanding we ſo ſeldom enjoy that Pleaſure with perfect Innocence; the true Account, I think, is this, That we find our ſelves diverted by Diſcourſe, and unbend our Thoughts from ſeverer Studies: That what we deſire and are moſt fond of, or what we have the greateſt Averſion to, lyes uppermoſt in our Minds; and therefore we propoſe ſome Eaſe in diſcharging our ſelves upon theſe Subjects.

But how very ſeldom do we find that Eaſe we propoſe by doing ſo? For this outward Conſolation mightily takes off from that inward and ſpiritual Satisfaction, in which true Happineſs conſiſts. Therefore it is our Duty to Watch and Pray, and to fill up the empty Spaces of Life, with theſe holy and retired Exerciſes. And, if at any time the Refreſhments of Company be choſen, and convenient, a ſtrict Guard ſhould be ſet upon our Tongues, that they utter nothing amiſs; but improve theſe very Diverſions to the Edification of our ſelves, and them that hear us. Impertinent and laviſh Talking is in it ſelf a very vicious Habit, and a wretched Hindrance to our ſpiritual Proficiency. And theſe two Conſiderations ought to make us extreamly cautious in our Converſation. But it is the Priviledge of Virtuous and Religious Diſcourſe, that Piety and Goodneſs are wonderfully promoted by ſuch Conferences. And then eſpecially, when Perſons of the like heavenly Spirit and Temper frequent one anothers Company with a Deſign of improving by it.

Chap. XI.

Of Peace of Mind, and a Deſire of Improvement.

MEn might live quiet and eaſie enough, if they would be careful not to give themſelves trouble, and forbear medling with what other People do and ſay, in which they are no way concerned. But how ſhould He be eaſie, who makes other Mens Cares his own? Who induſtriouſly ſeeks Diſquiet, and when he might reſt in Peace within doors, goes abroad to invite and fetch Diſturbance home to his Houſe? who takes ſuch Pains, and ſpends ſo much Time to enquire into the Affairs of Neighbours and Strangers, altogether foreign to him; and ſeldom or never deſcends into his own Breaſt, that he may examine and underſtand himſelf? *Bleſſed are the Meek*, ſays the Scripture, *for they ſhall inherit the Earth peaceably, and increaſe their Joy in the Lord.*

Matth. v. 5. Iſai. xxix. 19.

And whence is it, think you, that ſome Holy Perſons can ſo perfectly abſtract themſelves from the Concerns of this World, and find ſuch Satisfaction in their Divine Retirements, and Solitary Contemplations? From hence, no doubt; that they have made it their Buſineſs to mortifie all earthly and ſenſual Affections, and ſo have devoted themſelves entirely to God, and are at liberty to attend upon Him without diſtraction. But we find the caſe much otherwiſe with Us, becauſe our Paſſions interrupt our Piety, and the Tranſitory Things of this World continue tenderly to affect us. We ſeldom gain an entire Conqueſt over any one ill Habit; nor are we zealous to make every Day we live a Step to higher Degrees of Virtue. This is the reaſon why we are ſo cold and inſenſible, or at beſt but lukewarm and indifferent, in the Exerciſes of Piety and Private Meditation.

Were

Were we but, as we ought to be, dead to the World and our own Luſts, diſentangled from thoſe Chains and Snares within, that hamper and keep our Souls down to Matter and Senſe, then ſhould We alſo reliſh Acts of Devotion, and be raviſhed with marvellous Joy, when our Thoughts are fixed on God and Heaven. The only, or the greateſt Bar to theſe Spiritual Delights, proceeds from Paſſions unſubdued, and from our own Sloth, which cares not to encounter Difficulties, nor aſpire to the Perfection of the Saints. Hence is that Tameneſs and Dejection of Spirit, ſo viſible, ſo ſcandalous, when any little Misfortune comes acroſs us: Hence our vain Confidence, and anxious Care, which ſeeks and depends upon Humane Helps and Remedies; and neglects God, our only ſufficient Refuge and Deliverer.

Would we but quit our ſelves like Men, and reſolutely ſtand our Ground, we ſhould not fail of Succours from above. God is always ready to ſtrengthen thoſe who ſtrive lawfully, and place their Hope in the Aſſiſtance of his heavenly Grace: He means our very Hardſhips and Dangers for our Good; and engages us in new Conflicts and Temptations, that he may make our Victories more glorious, and qualifie us for a brighter Crown. If we content our ſelves with the Obſervance of the outward Duties only, and ſuppoſe this is the utmoſt Perfection neceſſary for us; we bring Religion into a very narrow Compaſs, and may quickly get to the End of it. But alas! the Main of our Buſineſs lyes within: The Axe muſt be laid to the Root of the Tree, and our Senſual Appetites quite cut down, before we can attain to true Pleaſure in Holineſs, and a peaceful Serenity of Mind.

Would we but impoſe upon our ſelves the Task of Mortifying a freſh Luſt, and Conquering a viſcious Habit every Year; even thus in a little time we might attain to Perfection. But alas! we often take the di-

rect contrary courſe; and are generally more wary, more devout, more zealous, to do well, and to avoid evil, when we firſt enter upon a Religious Life, than after we have ſpent ſome time in it. The Fervour of our Affection, which ought in reaſon to grow every Day ſtronger and brighter, cools and goes out again; and we reckon it a great matter, if our Zeal can be kept up to the ſame warmth, which we felt at its firſt kindling. We are too tender of our Eaſe, and loth to put our ſelves upon the ſtretch: whereas, would we but uſe a little Severity, and ſubmit to ſome Violence at firſt, that Trouble would quickly wear off; and all our Progreſs in Virtue be, not eaſie and tolerable only, but even a Delight and wonderful Satisfaction to us.

'Tis hard, I own, to part with our old Friends, and to unlearn Habits to which we have been long accuſtomed: and harder yet it is, to enter into a formal War with our own Inclinations; and obſtinately deny what we eagerly deſire. But if we do not conquer ſmaller Difficulties, what will become of us, when aſſaulted by greater? If we do not reſiſt our natural Propenſions at firſt, before Inclination is ſtrengthened by Cuſtom, the Enemy will gather Strength; every Day's Practice is a freſh Reinforcement; and the longer the Delay, the greater will be the Difficulty. O think of this in time, and conſider the happy Effects of an early and ſerious Piety: What Peace, what Triumphs to your ſelves; what Joy to others, to God and Chriſt, to Angels and Good Men you will certainly procure, by behaving your ſelves gallantly in this Spiritual Warfare. This ſure will ballance all the Hardſhips of Virtue; reproach your Cowardice and Sloth, provoke and inflame your Diligence and Courage; and make you zealous, reſolute, impatient, to grow in Grace, and advance every Day in Spiritual Perfection.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

The Advantage of Afflictions.

IT is good for me, that I have been in Trouble, ſays *David*. Nor is it *David*'s Caſe alone, for many Men have reaſon to bleſs that Providence, which ſends Croſſes and Calamities upon them. Theſe bring a Man's Thoughts home, put him upon Reflection, and help him to underſtand himſelf and his Condition. They ſhew him, that he is in a State of Exile and Pilgrimage, and forbid him to ſet up his Hope and Reſt, in a ſtrange Country, where he is no better than a Sojourner. Pſalm cxix.

Nor is it thus with thoſe Sufferings alone, which the immediate Hand of Heaven inflicts; but even thoſe whereof Men are the Inſtruments: The Injuries and contumelious Uſage, the Calumnies and Cenſures of them, who ſpeak and think ill of us, bring their Profit with them too; even when moſt wrongful, moſt undeſerved. For theſe oftentimes are an occaſion of rectifying our Meaſures, and bringing us to a juſter and more modeſt Opinion of our ſelves: They cure our Ambition and Vain-glory, and convince us how vain a thing it is, to thirſt after Reputation and the Praiſe of Men, when even Innocence and Goodneſs cannot protect us from Slander and Reproaches. They teach us to ſet a due Value upon the Teſtimony of our own Conſciences, and the righteous Approbation of God, the Searcher of Hearts; when that which he will not fail to Commend and Reward, cannot eſcape the Contempt and Condemnation of the World, nor prevail for ſo much as fair Quarter, from our miſtaken or injurious Brethren.

It is therefore both our Duty and our Wiſdom, ſo entirely to place our Happineſs and Expectations in

God alone, that we ſhall not need to be extremely Solicitous for many outward Comforts, or feel our ſelves Deſtitute or much Dejected, when any of theſe happen to fail or forſake us. For, when a well-diſpoſed Man is oppreſſed with Sufferings, and Temptations, or perplexed with evil Thoughts, he then feels experimentally, how neceſſary the Divine Aſſiſtance is, and how little he is able to do or endure without it; Then is he touched with inward Remorſe, Then does he Groan in ſecret, and, in the Anguiſh of his Heart, pour out his Requeſts for Relief and Deliverance: Then even Life it ſelf becomes a Burden, and Death deſirable; as that which will tranſlate him from this Valley of Tears and Corruption, to a Life of Immortality with his God and Redeemer. In a word, Such Circumſtances as theſe are more effectual than ten thouſand Arguments, to Convince him by his own ſenſible Experience, that perfect Security, and entire Satisfaction are not ſo much as conſiſtent with the Condition of Man in this preſent World, and therefore we muſt be content to wait another and future State; which alone deſerves our Affections, becauſe It alone can make us truly and compleatly Happy.

Chap. XIII.

Of Reſiſting Temptations.

SO long as we continue in this World, we muſt not flatter our ſelves with an Imagination ſo vain, as that of being exempted from Tribulations and Tryals: Theſe are ſo inſeparable from Mortality, that *Job* calls the Life of Man a *Warfare*, or *Place of Exerciſe*. It highly concerns every one of us upon this account, to take great

Job vii. 1. *Sec.* lxx. E. Vulg.

Care

Care for managing himſelf under his Temptations; To Watch and Pray diligently; as being duly ſenſible, that he hath a watchful Enemy to deal with, one who will not fail to take all Advantages of Deceiving, and who *goes about continually ſeeking whom he may Devour*. 1 Pet. v. 8. Nor muſt our Attainments in Virtue diſpoſe us to remit of this Care, for Virtue is no abſolute Security: No Man is ſo Perfect, ſo Holy, as never to be aſſaulted, or out of the Reach of this Adverſary. We may defend our ſelves againſt his Attacks, but ſtill attack'd, we muſt, and moſt certainly ſhall, be.

Now, though there be great Hazard and Uneaſineſs, yet is there likewiſe great Profit to be made from Temptations; Particularly as they contribute to the humbling our Minds, to the purging off our Droſs, and the making us Wiſer by ſuffering. This is the rough Way to Happineſs, which all the Saints of God have travelled before us, and by it at laſt were ſafe conducted to their Journy's end: And they who fell off, and were diſcouraged at the Ruggedneſs of the Paſſage, are all Reprobates and Caſt-aways. No Order or Profeſſion of Men is ſo ſacred, no Place ſo remote or ſolitary, but that Temptations and Troubles will find them out, and intrude upon them.

Nor ought it to ſeem ſtrange, that theſe ſhould haunt and purſue us cloſe, at all Times and Places, ſince we our ſelves carry about us the very Matter of our Temptations; and can never run away from that inborn Concupiſcence, upon which they work, and from whence they take occaſion to deſtroy us. This is the Account we may reaſonably give our ſelves, why there ſhould be ſuch an uninterruped Succeſſion of Temptations, and Miſeries, and why one Trouble ſhould preſs ſo hard upon the heels of another. For how indeed can it be otherwiſe? ſince with our Innocence we loſt our Safety and Happineſs; and muſt be born to

Trouble, becauſe the Ground of our Trouble is now become a part of our Nature. Many Men involve themſelves deeper in Temptations, by being too ſollicitous to decline them; for we muſt not ſuppoſe our ſelves always to have conquered a Temptation, when we have fled from it; the nobler, and ſometimes the more effectual way, is to vanquiſh them by patient enduring, and being humbled under them.

Thus much is plain; That by declining a Temptation we have not diſarmed it. The Root is ſtanding ſtill, and will ſoon be ſprouting again; and a Man who flees, is ſo far from getting ground upon his Adverſary, that he rather gives him Encouragement to purſue more vigorouſly. The way to overcome is by Patience, and Long-ſuffering; which, by God's Aſſiſtance, and by Degrees, though perhaps but ſlow ones, is more likely to ſucceed, than Heat, and Vehemence, and any the violenteſt and moſt obſtinate Efforts of our own Strength. When you find your ſelf Tempted, be ſure to ask Advice; and when you ſee another ſo, deal with him gently: Support him with Compaſſion, and adminiſter all the Comfort in your Power, as You could not but wiſh to be treated your ſelf, were You in his afflicted Circumſtances.

The beginning of all Temptations to Wickedneſs is the Fickleneſs of our own Mind, and want of Truſt in God. An inconſtant and irreſolute Man is like a Ship without a Pilot, driven to and fro, at the Mercy of every guſt of Wind. *Metals are tried in the Fire, and acceptable Men in the Furnace of Affliction.* We ſeldom know the true extent of our own Power, till Temptation diſcover it to us. But Watchfulneſs, which is always neceſſary, is chiefly ſo, when the firſt Aſſaults are made: For then the Enemy is more eaſily repulſed, if we never ſuffer him to get within us, but upon the very firſt approach draw up our Forces, and fight him without the Gate. 'Twas well adviſed of the Poet, *Take*

Ecclus. ii. 5.

Take Phyſick early, Med'cines come too late
When the Diſeaſe is grown inveterate.

Ovid. Principiis obſta, ſero Medicina paratur, Cum mala per longas invaluere moras.

And this will be more manifeſt, if we obſerve by what Methods and Degrees Temptations grow upon us. The firſt thing that preſents it ſelf to the Mind, is a plain ſingle Thought; This ſtreight is improved into a ſtrong Imagination; That again enforced by a ſenſible Delight; Then follow evil Motions, and when Theſe are once ſtirred, there remains nothing but the Aſſent of the Will, and then the Work is finiſhed. Now the firſt Steps of this are ſeldom thought worth our Care; ſometimes not taken notice of, ſo that the Enemy frequently is got cloſe up to us, and even within our Trenches, before we obſerve him; and we have loſt the Day for want of defending our ſelves, while he was in a condition of being reſiſted: For the longer we defer the Engagement, the weaker we grow, and the more our Adverſary gathers Strength.

The Seaſon of theſe Tryals is various and uncertain. Upon Some they are ſeverer preſently after their Converſion, upon Others toward the latter end of their Days. Some have them ſo thick repeated, that their whole Life is one continued Conflict; and Some again have but very few and gentle Tryals: All which different Caſes are ordered by a juſt and wiſe God; who knows what each Man deſerves, and what he is qualified to undergo; and weighs all Circumſtances ſo juſtly, that his ſeveral Diſpenſations are conſtantly ſubſervient to the Salvation and Happineſs of his choſen Servants.

Let us not therefore deſpair, when Temptations beſet us, but excite our Zeal, and pray to God more fervently, that he would be our preſent Help and

Refuge in all our Troubles: and, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, *That he would with the Temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it. Let us humble our ſelves* under *the trying Hand of God*, and patiently ſubmit to his good Pleaſure in all our Tribulation. For thoſe who do ſo, *he will Exalt in due time*, and *ſave them that be of a meek and contrite Spirit.*

1 Cor. x. 13. 1 Pet. iv.

Pſal. xxxiv.

By Temptations and Afflictions a Man is brought (as it were) to the Touch; by theſe his Proficiency is meaſured, and eaſily diſcernable: The greater theſe are, the more acceptable the Sufferer is to God, and the brighter Luſtre they add to his Virtue. For, to be Religious and Zealous in the Service of God, when no Uneaſineſs is upon us; This is no mighty matter. But if we can Suffer with Patience and Reſignation, and continue ſteady in the Love and Service of God, when he afflicts and ſends Bitterneſs into our Souls, this argues a noble Diſpoſition, and promiſes an extraordinary Perfection. Some Perſons have come off with Safety and Honour in very ſharp and trying Inſtances, and yet are worſted in common and trivial ones. And this Caſe is capable of very good Improvement: For thus no doubt God gives Men warning, that they ſhould not preſume upon their own Strength, but humbly take Sanctuary in Him, in Matters of Difficulty; Moved by the Experience of that Weakneſs, and Frailty, which hath yielded to ſlighter and leſs violent Temptations.

CHAP.

Chap. XIV.

Against Rash Judging.

Turn your Eyes inward upon your self; for you can very hardly exceed in judging your own Actions, nor be too cautious and sparing in censuring those of others. And *Censuring* indeed this deserves to be called in the worst sense of the word, rather than *Judging*; if we consider, not only how unprofitable to any good End, but how liable to infinite Mistakes, and very often how exceeding sinful, all such Judgments are; Whereas the Examining and Judging our own selves is a Work very proper for us; Such as we are qualified to undertake, and always turns to good account. We generally determine and give sentence, just as we stand affected to Persons and Things; Our own Passions and private Prepossessions blind our Minds, and either hinder us from discerning the Truth, or from letting it have its due Weight with us. Whereas, if we proceeded upon no other Principle but the Love of God, those Matters, which disagree with our own Sense of Things, would be allow'd fairer Consideration, and be less uneasie to us.

But now something foreign to the Case in hand, either lurking privately in our own Breast, or happening from without, engages and draws our Minds after it. Many People act upon private Respects and personal Interests, even when least sensible that they do so. These Men continue well satisfied, so long as Things agree with their own Inclination; but are out of all Patience, upon the least Difference and Contradiction. And hence it comes to pass, that good Correspondence is so often broke, and Quarrels commenced between Friends and Neighbours, even Men of Piety and the most Sacred Professions, upon no other Ground,

Ground, than that they do not Think and Act alike.

The Reaſon of this ſeems to be, that mighty Aſcendant which Uſe and inveterate Habits naturally gain upon us. We can very hardly be perſwaded to change a Practice or Opinion, which we have been educated in, and long accuſtomed to; or to ſuppoſe, that other Men ſee farther into things, than our ſelves. The Man therefore, who leans more to his own Underſtanding and Study, than to that Principle of Virtue, which ſhould diſpoſe him to an entire Submiſſion to Chriſt and his Doctrine, is by no means in a condition of having his Mind enlightned by God. For God expects, that we ſhould be ſubject to Him without any Reſerves, and thinks it fit, that a Religious Love and Obedience ſhould take place of our own Reaſonings.

Chap. XV.

Of Works of Charity.

THis is a conſtant and univerſal Rule, That no Conſideration of any Advantage, no Regard of any Perſon whatſoever, muſt ever prevail with us to do an Ill Thing: But the Benefit of a Perſon who ſtands in need of our Relief, is often times a ſufficient Warrant for leaving a Good Thing undone; or for changing our Meaſures, and chuſing to do one Good Thing rather than another. For indeed, properly ſpeaking, this is not ſo much an omitting to do well, as a prudent Contrivance to do better. But, let the Thing we do be what it will, it is the Principle, upon which we do it, that muſt recommend it; And, as without Charity, both all we are and all we do, ſignifie nothing; ſo, where this is at the bottom, every thing

thing we do, how mean ſoever in it ſelf, is of very valuable Conſideration. For God obſerves by what Springs we are moved, and meaſures our Deſert, by the Diſpoſition of the Heart, and not by the Worth of the Gift, or the Quality of the Action.

The Man then, that loves a great deal, does a great deal; The Man that does any thing well, in that one thing does a great deal; And he does well, who prefers the Good of others before his own private Pleaſure or Profit. That which frequently paſſes for Charity, is really no better than a ſelfiſh and carnal Principle: For how very ſeldom do Men act upon other Motives, than the gratifying their own Inclinations, the doing their own Will, the proſpect of their own Advantage, the expectation of Return or Reward; So conſulting the Convenience, not ſo much of Others, as Themſelves?

Now true and perfect *Charity ſeeks not its own Advantage*; and if God, in his Bounty, be pleaſed to recompence it, yet this Recompence is not the thing principally in view, but its great Aim and End is the Glory of God. For the ſame reaſon *Charity envieth not*; becauſe Envy is a Paſſion proceeding from Selfiſhneſs and Pride: And therefore the Man who acts upon a Principle ſo generous, as neither to ſeek his own private Intereſt, nor to take Satisfaction in himſelf, but places all his Content and Bliſs in God alone, is got above Envy, and incapable of ſo mean a Paſſion. Charity looks upon God as the Sole Beginning and End of all Good; the Source, from whence it flows, and the Immenſe Ocean, in which it is ſwallowed up; the Perſon from whom all the Saints derive their Righteouſneſs, and in the Fruition of whom the Reward of their Righteouſneſs conſiſts. And therefore the Man poſſeſs'd of this Principle, ſets no undue Value upon himſelf or others; He takes no part of the Merit or Honour to himſelf; He is not pro-

1 Cor. xiii.

profuſe in the Commendation of others, but aſcribes the whole Glory of every virtuous Action to Him, whoſe, originally and in truth, it is. And little need be ſaid, to ſhew, that one thus diſpoſed, thus perſwaded of God, as the Only, the Univerſal Good, muſt have ſet his Heart upon things above. For ſure the leaſt Spark of this Holy Fire will ſerve to kindle in our Breaſts the Love of Heaven and Spiritual Joys, and ſuffice to convince us, that all here below is full of Vanity, and by no means an Object worthy our Affections.

Chap. XVI.

Of Bearing with other Mens Faults.

When you obſerve in your ſelf or others any thing amiſs, which you would fain but cannot Cure, your Duty in ſuch Caſes is to endure it, till God ſees fit to order Matters otherwiſe. And a Duty this is, highly reaſonable, if you conſider, that poſſibly it is much wiſer and better, that theſe Faults ſhould not be amended, than that they ſhould. It may be, God permits them for the Tryal and Increaſe of your Patience and Humility, without which all other Virtues are of no great regard in his ſight. But at the ſame time that you ought to bear, you are no leſs obliged to pray againſt them; To beg, that the ill Example of them may be no hindrance to you in your Chriſtian Courſe; And to implore the Aſſiſtance of his Grace, for the bearing them in ſuch a manner, that the Provocations ariſing thence may never ſhake your Temper, or betray you to any ſinful, or ſo much as indecent, exceſs of Paſſion.

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If a Man refuse to comply with good Advice, or to reform upon Admonitions and Reproofs; you are not, after these Offers of doing him Service have been made and repeated, obliged to contend with him any longer. 'Tis better to commit the whole Affair to God, and endeavour to effect that by your Prayers, which your Discourses could not do. Beseech Him therefore, whose infinite Wisdom knows how to bring Good out of Evil, that his Will may be done, and his Name glorified; and that all, who Serve and Worship him, may be led into such Actions as most contribute to these Ends, and are well-pleasing in his sight. And, when you have thus discharged your Part, set your self resolutely to bear the greatest Infirmities and Faults of your Brethren without any Disturbance. And, for confirming this Resolution, remember, that You also have many Failings of your own, by which the Patience of other People will have its turn of being exercised. And if you do, (as certainly you cannot but) see this, think how unreasonable it is, to expect you should make others in all particulars, what you would have them to be; when you cannot so much as make your self, what you are sensible you ought to be. And, indeed, nothing is more common, than to express exceeding Zeal in amending our Neighbours, and mighty Indignation against Their Vices or Imperfections, while at the same time we neglect the beginning at Home, and either quite overlook, or seem highly contented with our own.

We take a pleasure in being severe upon others, but cannot endure to hear of our own Faults. We are surprised and uneasie at the Liberties they take with us, and wonder with what Confidence they can pretend such Interest in us; and yet there is nothing so extravagant, which we do not think we have a Right to expect, and resent it highly to be denied. We set

up

up for Reformers, declaim at the Wickedneſs of the Age, and are all for Suppreſſing and Puniſhing it by rigorous Laws; and yet are unwilling, that any Check or Reſtraint ſhould be put upon our own Freedoms. This ſhews, how far we are from obſerving that Great Rule of Equity, The Loving our Neighbour as our Selves; and Meting to Others the ſame Meaſure, which we are content ſhould be meaſured to Us again.

Further yet, Suppoſing all Men to be without Faults, ſome Excellencies and Virtues muſt be loſt too; What would become of Patience, what of Forgiving and Forbearing one another for Chriſt's ſake, if there were no Provocations to try our Temper? And ſuch there could not be, if every Man were Perfect, and did his Duty. But, as the preſent Condition of the World is ordered, God hath furniſhed us with conſtant Occaſions of Bearing one anothers Burdens. For there is no Man lives without his Failings; no Man that is ſo happy, as never to give Offence; no Man without his Load of Trouble; no Man ſo Sufficient, as never to need Aſſiſtance; none ſo Wiſe, but the Advice of others may, at ſome time or other, be uſeful and neceſſary for him: And therefore, we ſhould think our ſelves under the ſtrongeſt Engagements, to Comfort, and Relieve, and Inſtruct, and Admoniſh, and Bear with one another. Beſides, We ſhall do well to reflect, that Afflictions and uneaſie Accidents are the cleareſt Indication of a Man's Goodneſs, and the Degrees of his Improvement. For we miſtake extreamly, in imagining, that any thing which happens to us from without, is the real cauſe of our doing well or ill; Adverſity does not make Virtue or Vice, but exert and draw them into Practice; it does not change the Man from what he was, but only diſcover what he really is.

CHAP.

Chap. XVII.

A Recluſe Life.

THe Man, who deſires to maintain Peace and a good Underſtanding with Others, muſt learn, in order to it, in many Caſes to deny and ſubdue himſelf. If then you would keep your ground, or advance forward in Piety and Virtue, poſſeſs your ſelf entirely with the Notion of your being no better than a Stranger and Pilgrim only here upon Earth. As ſuch, be content to forego the Enjoyments and Eſteem of the World, and to be accounted a Fool for Chriſt's ſake. For, till this be done, You are not duly prepared to retire, and enter into a courſe of Life wholly devoted to God and Religion.

The peculiar Habit, and Tonſure, and other Formalities, by which Monaſticks are diſtinguiſhed from common Men, add nothing to their Sanctity, nor contribute in the leaſt to render them what they pretend to be. This can only be done by a Temper, as different from the reſt of the World, as their Way of Living: An entire Change of Manners and an effectual Mortification of their Paſſions and Deſires. He that retreats out of any other Deſign but the Service and Honour of God, and the Salvation of his Soul, will be ſo far from avoiding Miſery and Trouble, that he will involve himſelf in new and greater Troubles, and become more exquiſitely Wretched, than the Affairs of the World could make him. No body can continue eaſie in his own Mind, who does not endeavour to become leaſt of all, and Servant of all.

Remember then, that You come to Obey and not to Govern; The State of Life, to which You are called, is a State of Labour and Hardſhip, and much Suffering; not of Leiſure, and Eaſe, and Diverſion. You do not

not ſo properly forſake, as change, your Buſineſs. For this ſort of Life is ſuch a Tryal of Men, as the Fire is of Gold: And none make good their Poſt in it, but ſuch as are content to humble themſelves, and heartily and chearfully ſubmit to any thing for God's ſake.

Chap. XVIII.

Of the Examples of Holy Men in former Ages.

IT will much contribute to our Progreſs and Encouragement in Chriſtian Virtues, to keep in view thoſe lively Patterns, which theſe holy Fathers have ſet us, whoſe Zeal and exalted Piety ſhone clear in former Generations. For, by obſerving the brightneſs of their Luſtre, we ſhall at the ſame time diſcern the faintneſs and dimneſs of our own Light, and bluſh to find the preſent Age ſo much eclipſed by the unequal Compariſon. Alas! how poor and mean are our Attainments when put into the Ballance with Theirs! Thoſe excellently good Perſons, thoſe affectionate Friends and Followers of Chriſt, ſerved God inſtantly, in Hunger and Thirſt, in Cold and Nakedneſs, in Labour and Wearineſs, in Watchings and Faſtings, in Prayers and holy Meditations, in many Perſecutions and ſharp Reproaches.

Bleſſed God! how many, how grievous Miſeries and Hardſhips did the Apoſtles and Martyrs, the Confeſſors and Virgins endure heretofore! And not They only, but all thoſe brave and generous Souls in the primitive and purer State of the Church, who made it the ſtudy of their whole Lives to tread in the Steps of their meek and ſuffering Saviour! Theſe heavenly-minded Perſons even hated their own Lives unto the Death, that they might preſerve them unto Life eternal.

nal. How very auſtere, how entirely mortified, was the Converſation of the ancient Hermits in the Deſerts? How long, how ſharp the Temptations they underwent? How fierce and frequent their Conflicts with the Enemy of Souls? How conſtant and fervent their Prayers? How rigorous their Abſtinence, how unblemiſhed their Chaſtity? How eager their Deſires, how indefatigable their Endeavours, after higher degrees of Perfection? How vigorous and gallant the War they waged againſt their Vices and rebellious Appetites? How pure and uncorrupt all their Intentions, how free from any mixture of worldly Proſpects, and ſincerely fixed upon God and his Glory? The whole Day they employed in hard Labour, the whole Night in Devotion; From which their very Labours did not hinder them, for even theſe were conſecrated too, by the frequent intermingling of Prayers and holy Ejaculations.

Their great Care in a word was, That no Portion of the time God gave them in the Body, might be ſpent unprofitably: And what they laboured to make an Improvement, their Zeal made a Delight. For Time in their eſteem was much too ſwift; and their Devotions ſo far from creating Wearineſs, that every Hour ſeem'd ſhort, and ſnatched away thoſe Joys too haſtily, which they felt in converſing with him whom their Soul loved. Their Thoughts were ſo intent, their Raptures ſo entertaining, ſo raviſhingly ſweet, that they became almoſt all Spirit, and quite forgot their Bodies, and the Care neceſſary for ſupporting them in Life. Riches, and Honours, and Greatneſs, and Friends, and Relations, were now no longer their Concern: How ſhould they? when even a part of their own Perſons ceaſed to be ſo; And providing thoſe things, without which, Mortals cannot ſubſiſt, was now grown a Trouble, and, to Perſons ſo abſtracted from Fleſh and Senſe, a painful and unſeaſonable Interruption of better and much more important Buſineſs.

These Men, 'tis true, had no earthly Possessions, but they, who were Poor in that respect, were exceeding Wealthy in another, rich in the Favour of God, and abounding in excellent Virtues. What they wanted of outward Comforts was much better supplied by the plentiful Communications of divine Graces, the inward Refreshments and unspeakable Consolations of the Blessed Spirit. These Strangers to the World, were intimately acquainted with its Maker and Lord: and, how meanly soever they might think of themselves, or how despicable they might appear in the Eyes of others, yet in the sight of God they were particularly dear, highly honourable, and precious. They persevered in their Humility, and sincere Obedience, in their Courage and Constancy, their Meekness, and Patience, and great Charity. And by this continuance in well-doing and contented suffering, they made daily advances in spiritual Perfection, and attained to a wonderful high pitch of Grace and Favour with God. By this exemplary Piety, they are become proper Patterns for the Imitation of all devout Men in after Ages; And, tho' but a few in number, ought to encourage and prevail upon us more powerfully to rival their uncommon Zeal, than the numerous Examples of negligent and lukewarm Christians should do, to slaken and suffer our Piety to grow cold.

To these we may add the ardent Devotion of those Holy Men, who retired from the World into Cloisters and Cells, which at their first Institution, were Places of great Piety and severe Virtue. Their Prayers were frequent and devout, their Emulation in spiritual Perfections noble, their Discipline strict and well ordered; their Obedience to Superiours modest and respectful. Even those Footsteps of their Piety still remaining, from which their Successors have since so scandalously degenerated, are sufficient to inform us, that the first Combatants in this Way against the World and the Flesh,

Fleſh, were Men of Gallantry, and juſt Renown. But now alas! how wretched a paſs are we come to, when it is counted a mighty matter, if here and there one keep himſelf from tranſgreſſing the Rules of his Order, and patiently ſubmit to thoſe Exerciſes which his Profeſſion impoſes upon him?

Oh what a miſerable Age of cold Indifference and wicked Careleſneſs are we fallen into! How are the holy Flames of Primitive Zeal extinguiſhed! And inſtead of being a Delight, how great a Wearineſs, how inſupportable a Burden, are Religious Duties and Exerciſes become to us! How wretched is that Stupidity, how profound that Sleep, which now oppreſſes the Spirits of Mankind, when ſo many bright Examples cannot prevail with us to ſhake off our Sloath and Slumber, nor awaken our Souls into any tolerable Concern for baniſh'd Piety and neglected Virtue!

CHAP. XIX.

The Exerciſe of a truly Religious Perſon.

THe Life of a Chriſtian, who hath dedicated himſelf to the Service of God, ſhould abound with eminent Virtues of all kinds, that he may be really the ſame Perſon, which he is by outward Appearance and Profeſſion; Indeed he ought not only to be the ſame, but much more, in his inward diſpoſition of Soul, becauſe he profeſſes to ſerve a God, who ſees the inward Parts, a Searcher of the Heart and Reins, a God and Father of Spirits: And therefore, ſince we are always in his Sight, we ſhould be exceeding careful to avoid all Impurity, all that may give him Offence, whoſe Eyes cannot behold Iniquity. We ſhould, in a word, ſo far as mortal and frail Nature can, imitate the Bleſ-

ſed Angels in all manner of Holineſs, ſince We, as well as They, are always in his Preſence. To this purpoſe it would be expedent, daily to renew our Reſolutions of living well, and every Morning to refreſh and quicken that Zeal, with which they were made at firſt. To beg of God, that he would help us, and enable us that Day to begin well; To *begin*, I ſay, for all that we have done hitherto ought in lowlineſs of Mind to ſeem, and to be acknowledged by us, as nothing.

Great Diligence and Watchfulneſs is neceſſary, in order to diſcharging faithfully what we have intended, and reſolved, zealouſly. For if They, who are moſt ſincere and vigorous in their Purpoſes, are yet too often weary, and remiſs in their Performances, What do we think muſt needs become of thoſe who purpoſe but very ſeldom, or very coldly? 'Tis true indeed, the Occaſions of our falling off, or fainting in our Minds, are various and many; and ſeldom do we allow our ſelves in any Omiſſion of Religious Duties, without even thus perceiving a very ſenſible abatement and decay of Zeal. The Perſeverance of good Men, in the midſt of ſo many Difficulties and Avocations, muſt be aſcribed to God's Favour and Aſſiſtance, more than to any Care and Wiſdom of their own. And Good Men have always this Notion of the thing, for they depend upon God for the Succeſs of all they do, even of their beſt and wiſeſt Undertakings.

Prov. xvi. 9. *A Man's Heart deviſeth his Way, but the Lord directeth his Steps:* Says *Solomon*, We may contrive and act as ſeems moſt adviſeable; but, as *the very Preparations of the Heart* by which we

Ibid. i. do ſo, are from the Lord, ſo is the Event of our having done it entirely in his diſpoſal.

If at any time a Religious Exerciſe be omitted upon the account of ſome other Act of Piety, or ſome Work of Charity at that time inconſiſtent with it; this

this does us no Diſſervice, and the Omiſſion is eaſily repaired. But if through any loathleſs or indiſpoſition of Mind, if through Lazineſs or any voluntary Neglect of our own, our cuſtomary Devotions be paſſed over; this is from a wicked Cauſe, and will not fail to have a very ill Effect upon us. When we keep our Zeal, with all our might, and do our very beſt, yet even then we ſhall find our ſelves often defective. But, though we cannot arrive at abſolute Perfection, nor conquer all our Frailties, nor prevent all our Hindrances in Goodneſs; yet ought not this to diſcourage us from ſtriving and reſolving. And, when we do ſo, we ſhall do well not to content our ſelves with general Intentions, but bend our Force againſt ſome particular thing, and chiefly againſt ſuch, as we have found by Experience to be the greateſt and moſt troubleſome Obſtruction to our doing well. The Condition of our Affairs without, and that of our own Souls within, muſt be diligently conſidered, and reduced into the beſt Order we can; becauſe both the Circumſtances of the One, and the Diſpoſitions of the Other, contribute greatly to our furtherance in Piety.

It may be you cannot at all times recollect and call your ſelf to Account; but certainly you cannot want Opportunities of doing ſo once every Day at leaſt. The Morning or the Evening are proper for it. At Night you may lay out your Buſineſs for the Day following, and, at the return of Night again, you may reflect what hath paſſed in the Day-time; how your Thoughts, and Words, and Actions, have agreed with that Scheme of Behaviour you laid before your ſelf. Where you have tranſgreſt, how far exceeded or fallen ſhort, and in what Inſtances, (for alas! it is but too likely that you have in many Inſtances) offended God and Man. In this Scheme you form of living well, quit your ſelf like a Man in reſiſting the Aſſaults of the Devil. To this end begin with keeping a ſtrict

hand over your Appetite; for when you have once attained to a rigid and maſterly Sobriety, all other fleſhly Deſires and Temptations will be vanquiſhed and kept under with much leſs difficulty. To the ſame purpoſe, beware of Idleneſs; be conſtantly in Action, let Reading, or Writing, or Praying, or Meditating, or Contriving ſomewhat for the Good of Others, employ your leiſure Hours. Some bodily Exerciſes are very fit to be uſed, but theſe will require Prudence in the Choice of them; for all are not equally convenient; and therefore the Nature and Degrees of them muſt be conſidered, as well as the Temper and Conſtitution of the Perſon conſulted, to render them profitable.

Some religious Exerciſes the Community is concerned in, and they muſt be attended to in publick. Others are perſonal, and theſe will be beſt performed in private. This Diſtinction is of great uſe, to keep Men from acting improperly; for even a good thing may loſe much of its gracefulneſs and commendation, by being done out of due place and time. Another neceſſary Caution, which many good People ſtand in need of, is, That you ſhould not be ſo zealouſly bent upon any private Devotions or Duties, as for Their ſakes to ſlight or diſuſe the Publick; For theſe require at leaſt an equal degree of your Eſteem, and Care in the attendance of them. But when you have diſcharged your Duty in that Point, and done all that your particular Station, or the Commands of your Superiours require from you, Then is the proper Seaſon, and then you will do well, to return into your own Breaſt, and employ the remainder of your Time, as Piety, and Religious Purpoſes ſhall direct. And here again a prudent Choice is needful, For all ſorts, even of Religious Entertainments, are not ſuited alike to our Spiritual Advantage. Some difference ariſes from the conſideration of the Perſons; and another very viſible one from the different Times and Seaſons of uſing them. Some

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are more proper for Holydays, others for common Days; some for Festivals, others for Fasts; Some for a time of Temptation and Affliction, Others for a peaceful and serene State of Mind; Some to Persons in Grief or under calamitous Circumstances, Others for Prosperity, when our Spirits flow gayly, and our Hearts rejoyce and sing for the Goodness of the Lord. Particularly it will be convenient in an especial manner to renew and raise our Souls by very frequent and solemn Acts of Piety and Devotion, at the constant returns of all the Christian Festivals. For these should represent to our Minds the eternal uninterrupted Festival of Joy and Thanks, celebrated by the Saints in Heaven. And this should put our Souls upon the Wing, inflame our Devotion, mount us up thither, and make us act even beyond our selves; more cheerfully, more vigorously; As if we were just then going to receive that glorious Reward of our Labour, which these glad Seasons bring so lively Ideas of to our Thoughts.

And, if the Time of our receiving that Reward be still delayed, let us so be thankful for a longer time given us here, as at the same time to be humbled by that very length of Life, which the generality of the World are apt to esteem the greatest Happiness that can befal them. Let us endeavour to do God still better Service, but let us suspect, that we have not served him yet as we ought. For, if we had, he would not have put off our Recompence to a farther Day; and probable it is, that he does not translate us to Heaven as yet, because we are not fit for it. And let us therefore double our Care to qualifie our selves for that Glory, which in his own appointed time shall not fail to be manifested in us. Come he most assuredly will, and *Blessed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find Watching. Verily I say unto you, he will make him Ruler over all his Goods, and Partaker of the Joy of his Lord.* Luke xii. 37. Matth. xxiv. 47.

Chap. XX.

Love of Solitude and Silence.

Reſerve a convenient Proportion of your Time for privacy and converſing with your ſelf; and let this be ſpent in frequent and thankful Reflections upon the Mercies of God; and in reading good Books. Among which I adviſe you by all means to let alone nice Diſputes, and unprofitable Speculations, and keep to ſuch Subjects as may be proper for the exciting your Zeal and quickning your Affections; rather than ſuch, as may employ the Subtlety of your Wit. Never fear that you ſhall want leiſure for theſe good Purpoſes. For if you will prevail with your ſelf to abate the mere Impertinences of Life, the unneceſſary Converſations, the Time ſpent in hearing and telling of News, in enquiring after, and ſpreading about, idle Reports; and ſuch as are either faulty or frivolous waſtings of your Time, You cannot want ſufficient Leiſure, and great Opportunities, for cheriſhing and improving holy and heavenly Meditations. Thus did the moſt eminent Saints induſtriouſly avoid Company, and Buſineſs; and chooſe to Converſe with God in private, as much and as often as poſſibly they could.

'Tis a good Reflection, which the Philoſopher made of himſelf; That he never was in other Mens Company, but he came out of it leſs a Man than he went in: And this is what we may frequently confirm by our own Experience, after a great deal of Diſcourſe hath paſs'd. 'Tis certainly much eaſier for a Man to reſtrain himſelf from Talking at all, than to enter into Diſcourſe, and not ſay more than becomes him: Infinitely eaſier to live at Home and ſee no body, than to go abroad into Company, and return innocent. A Man therefore, who makes inward and ſpiritual Perfection

fection his great End, muſt imitate the Bleſſed Jeſus, and often withdraw himſelf from the Multitude. No one is qualified to converſe in Publick, who is not highly contented without ſuch Converſation; nor to entertain, or receive Entertainment from, Others, who cannot entertain himſelf alone with Satisfaction. No Man is fit to govern, who hath not learn'd how to obey: No Man can enjoy Mirth with Safety, who is not at the ſame time in a Condition of rejoycing in a Good Conſcience: None is fit to ſpeak freely, but he who can, without any violence to himſelf, refrain his Tongue, or keep ſilence altogether.

Accordingly we may obſerve, that the Pleaſures and inward Security of the beſt Men, have always been tempered with the Fear of God. Nor was their Humility or their Care one whit abated, in conſideration of thoſe extraordinary Virtues, and abundant Meaſures of Divine Grace, in which they excell'd common Chriſtians. But the Security of wicked Men, and that Satisfaction they take in themſelves, Springs from Pride and Haughtineſs of Temper; and therefore the conſtant Effects of it are an undue Contempt of others, and a falſe Opinion of themſelves.

Never flatter your ſelf with an Expectation of abſolute Safety in this Life, whatever your Condition, how far retired from the World, or out of the way of Temptation it may ſeem to be. For it often happens, that thoſe whom the World eſteems in Strength and Virtue above common Men, have been involved in Dangers proportionably greater than Theirs, merely upon the account of the too confident Opinion they had of their own Abilities. And this Conſideration makes the being tempted ſometimes a Bleſſing, greater than that of living altogether eaſie and free from Temptation. For the oftner we are attack'd, the greater Check this gives to our Self-conceit and Spiritual Security; and the more we are afflicted, the leſs

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apt we ſhall be to love or uſe the external Advantages of this World, beyond the bounds of Decency and Moderation. And, if a Man could ſo perfectly draw off his Mind from theſe, as never to purſue any tranſitory Pleaſure, never to engage himſelf with the World; O what bleſſed, what perpetual Peace of Conſcience would that Man feel, and even be raviſhed with! Nay, could we but cut off all our unprofitable and groundleſs Fears and Cares, and employ our Thoughts upon ſuch Objects only, as are weighty and uſeful, ſuch as promote the Honour and Service of God, our own Salvation, and the Good of others, How eaſie and quiet, how free from all Reproach, would ſuch a One's Breaſt be to him!

No Man deſerves inward and heavenly Comforts, who does not diligently examine, and willingly afflict himſelf. To be qualify'd for this Solitude, it is abſolutely needful to obſerve that Method recommended by the Pſalmiſt; *Commune with your own Heart in your Chamber, and be ſtill. Enter into thy Cloſet, and ſhut the Door about thee*, ſays our Saviour. Advice, which never can be more ſeaſonable, than upon theſe occaſions: For the Cloſet will give you the Satisfaction, which it is ſcarce poſſible not to loſe in a more publick place; And if the Cloſet be not pleaſant, the only reaſon is, that it hath been leſs frequented than it ought. To thoſe, who at firſt uſe this Retirement carefully, it miniſters a Pleaſure and ſecret Conſolation, above what any Company or Diverſion in the World can pretend to.

Pſal. iv. Matth. vi.

It is by ſilent and ſolitary Study, that the Soul gets acquainted with the hidden Myſteries of Scripture; Here ſhe finds thoſe Flouds of pious Tears, by which Holy Men waſh themſelves Day and Night; Here ſhe contracts a Familiarity and free Intercourſe with God, ſo much the cloſer and more intimate, as ſhe removes to a greater diſtance from the Noiſe and Hurry of the World.

World. Think not then, that the Man who withdraws from his Friends and Acquaintance, is perfectly alone. No, he only changes that for better Company, and is viſited in his quiet Retreats by God and his holy Angels. A wiſe Man would rather chooſe to live thus unobſerved, and proſecute the Buſineſs of his Soul without Interruption; than even to work Miracles, and attract univerſal Admiration and Applauſe, at the expence of neglecting his own Safety.

It is highly agreeable to the Character of a Perſon entirely devoted to God, to ſtir but ſeldom abroad, to decline being publickly ſeen of Men, and to be as little fond of ſeeing the World. For to what purpoſe indeed ſhould any one be eager to ſee that which he muſt not enjoy? *The World paſſeth away and all the Deſire thereof*, ſays the Apoſtle. Our ſenſual Affections invite and entice us, but when the moment of gratifying that Inclination is once over; what have you got by the Bargain, but ſerious Remorſe, and an unſettled Temper of Mind? He that goes out full of Satisfaction often returns as full of Melancholy and Diſguſt; and many a merry Evening occaſions a ſad Morning. Thus all the Pleaſures of Senſe careſs and court us at the firſt meeting, but at their parting leave a Sting behind, and gall our Hearts with ſharp and killing Pains. What can you ſee in any other Place which the moſt retired Grove or Deſert will not preſent to your Eye? Here you ſurvey the Heavens, here view the Earth, here ſee the ſeveral Elements, which are the Seeds and firſt Ingredients of which the whole World and every Creature in it are Compounded. 1 John ii. 17.

But what can you ſee either here, or any where elſe, which is of long Continuance? You expect perhaps that Variety will ſatisfie you: Alas! it cannot be. For, ſuppoſe you could at one View have all things under the Sun ſet before you; what is there even in this, ſave only the beholding them with your Eyes? Turn then thoſe

thoſe Eyes where they may gaze with Profit. Look up to God on high; fix them upon the Throne of Grace in Prayer, and continue ſtedfaſt and fervent in this, till you obtain Pardon for your Sins and Errors. Leave the Vanities of the World, to the vain Men of the World; But conſider, that You are a Child of God, and therefore bend your Thoughts and Labours entirely to thoſe things which your heavenly Father requires at your Hands. Invite that Jeſus, in whom your Soul delights, into your Apartment; there ſolace your ſelf with his Love, for in that Converſation only true Peace and ſolid Joy are to be found. If this ſeem a Paradox, I muſt inform you what is the true Occaſion of its doing ſo. Had you never mingled your ſelf with the World, nor imbibed any of its vain Notions, your Mind had been more ſettled and compoſed: But now the Itch of Novelty hath taken hold of you, and it muſt coſt ſome Uneaſineſs to cure this Evil; But till that Cure be effected, Peace and perfect Evenneſs of Temper you cannot have, nor be reconciled to Solitude, and the ſubſtantial Pleaſures that attend it.

Chap. XXI.

Compunction of Heart.

He that would grow in Virtue and Grace, muſt be ſure to preſerve a conſtant awful Senſe of the Divine Majeſty upon his Mind; Checking by this Holy Fear all his indecent Liberties, keeping his Appetites and Affections under ſtrict Diſcipline; and not letting himſelf looſe to light or extravagant Mirth. Employ your ſelf therefore in humbling, and afflicting your own Mind, and this will certainly lead you to a devout and truly Chriſtian Temper. For infinite Advantage is

is to be had by these zealous Exercises, which Folly and Inconsideration quickly lose again. One would wonder indeed, how Men can indulge their Mirth to so extravagant a degree, when the Miseries of this Life, and the Sins we have to account for, are so many and so great, that a Man who seriously considers the Danger his Soul is in, can very hardly be merry at all, without some sudden Damp upon his Spirits. It is from the Levity of our own unthinking Minds, a stupid Forgetfulness of our sinful Condition, and a continuing insensible of those Sorrows which ought most tenderly to affect us, that we so often indulge the Excesses of Laughter and Gayety, when Sighs and Tears would much better become us.

Assure your self, there can be no true Liberty, no innocent Merriment, without the Fear of God, and a good Conscience. Happy therefore is the Man, who can disengage himself from all those Hindrances, which the Business and Diversions of the World cast in his way, and give his Thoughts up entirely to that godly Sorrow, which worketh Repentance and Salvation. Happy He, that can abandon every thing by which his Conscience is defiled or burdened; and set himself at liberty from treacherous and ensnaring Pleasures. And this may be compassed by Resolution and Constancy; For how difficult and contrary soever it may seem to the general way of the World, and our own former Practice; yet no Habit is so strong, but by frequent and manly Attempts the direct contrary Habit may be acquired and confirmed.

If you will firmly set your self to let other Peoples Affairs alone, They will follow the Example, and not concern themselves with yours. Do not therefore create unnecessary Trouble to your self by making other Mens Business your own, and involving your Thoughts and Cares in Matters of Persons above you. Leave the Great Ones of the World to manage their own

own Concerns, and keep your Eyes and Obſervation at home. Your own Soul is the thing you ought to look after. This requires your niceſt Inſpection and utmoſt Diligence; and the Cenſuring and Correcting your ſelf is a Duty which ſhould take place above the Adviſing or Reproving the deareſt Friend you have. It may be, this Reſerve may be interpreted Sullenneſs, and loſe you the Favour and good Eſteem of Men; but let not that loſs afflict you; There can be no ſo juſt ground of Diſſatisfaction and Remorſe, as the not behaving your ſelf with all the ſtrict Virtue and Circumſpection, which becomes a Perſon who hath renounced the World, and devoted himſelf to the Service of God. 'Tis true, an honourable Opinion of Us is a Comfort: But it is ſometimes better to want Variety of Comforts, than to have them. This is often the Caſe with Advantages merely Humane, the External and the Worldly; and, as for thoſe which are Spiritual and derived from God, if we be either deprived of theſe, or not ſenſible of their ſweet Refreſhment, the Fault is our own, who neglect to put our ſelves into a fit Diſpoſition for them, by godly Sorrow for our Sins, and abandoning thoſe vain and outward Comforts, which ſhould make room for the ſubſtantial and heavenly.

Get therefore a true and perfect Knowledge of your ſelf, ſee and confeſs you deſerve not any Divine Conſolation, nay, that you do really deſerve Deſertion, and Sorrow, and much Miſery. When a Man's Mind is inflamed with a truly religious Zeal, this World appears not only flat and inſipid, but very bitter and loathſom to him. A good Man can never fail of diſcovering juſt Matter of Grief, and many Occaſions that provoke his Tears. For, whether he conſider his own Circumſtances or thoſe of other Men, he will find, that no Man here is exempted from Calamities. And the more cloſely he conſiders his own Condition, the greater

er ſtill will be his Concern. But the Misfortunes from without might be born with better Temper, were there not much more grievous from within. For, of all the Miſeries that humble our Souls with Sadneſs, none are ſo juſtly lamented as our Sins and Infirmities; The wretched Load and Incumbrance theſe are to our Conſcience, and the Indiſpoſition, the Diſability they bring us under, of attending without Diſtraction to holy Duties and heavenly Contemplations.

By theſe we are engaged upon trifling and unprofitable Thoughts, and diverted from weighty and uſeful Subjects. For would we but turn the Current of our Thoughts another way, the Effect would be viſible and very happy. If we did but ſeriouſly reflect, how certainly we muſt dye, as often as we think how long it is likely we may live, we ſhould be more zealous and diligent to amend our Lives, and provide for that important Change. And would we but ſet before our Minds a lively Repreſentation of thoſe dreadful Torments which await the Damned in Hell; it were not poſſible ſure to ſhrink back as we do, from the Auſterities and Mortifications of a Religious Life; or to ſuppoſe any Labour and Pain which we can undergo in the mean while, a Hardſhip not moſt willingly to be choſen, for the preventing ſo dreadful a Condemnation. But now, becauſe theſe things are but ſeldom and very ſlightly thought upon, and we in tenderneſs to our own Eaſe, much rather ſubmit to the ſoothing Impreſſions of preſent deceitful Pleaſures, than to thoſe harſh and cutting ones of future Miſery and Anguiſh; we ſtill go on in the ſame Coldneſs and Indifference, and indulge our Sloth at the expence of our Virtue.

I grant indeed, that ſome religious Severities are tedious and painful to the Body. But the Fault does not always lye there; for the Body ſometimes complains and droops, not ſo much from its own Sufferings, as for the Meanneſs and Cowardice of the Soul, which

which ought to encourage and ſupport it. Beg therefore of God moſt earneſtly, that he would kindle in your Heart a true Chriſtian Courage and fervent Zeal: Dare to entertain your ſelf upon the moſt ungrateful, when they are profitable and neceſſary, Subjects; Prefer the Mournings of a pious Penitent before all the vain Jollity of a wicked and unthinking World; and pray that, God would do to thee, what the Pſalmiſt ſays he does to his own People, even *feed thee with the Bread of Tears, and give thee Plenteouſneſs of Tears to drink.*

Pſal. lxxx. 5.

CHAP. XXII.

The Miſerable Condition of Man conſidered.

WRetched thou art, O Man, whereſoever thou art; Wretched thou muſt be which way ſoever thou turneſt thy ſelf: Beſet on all ſides with Miſeries, without Remedy, without any Poſſibility of Eſcape by Humane Helps; and only to be avoided by taking Sanctuary in God. Why then art thou diſquieted at Croſſes and Diſappointments; when theſe are the Portion of all Mankind? It is not yours and mine alone, but the greateſt, the beſt Men drink of the bitter Cup; and no Man ever lived in uninterrupted Happineſs: None ever ſucceeded in all his Wiſhes and Attempts; None ever was above Calamities, or free from Vexation of Spirit. Since therefore ſo ordained it is, that all muſt ſuffer and be miſerable, are all equally ſo? No; There are different Conditions and Degrees of Suffering; and His is certainly the beſt and moſt comfortable, who is called and diſpoſed to ſuffer for the ſake of God and a good Conſcience.

It

It is uſual for Men, who know no better, to envy and admire the Rich, the Great, the Honourable; to imagine, that Princes and Perſons of plentiful Fortunes are completely happy. But this is the effect of great Weakneſs and Inconſideration. If therefore we would rectifie ſuch miſtaken Apprehenſions, let us get a right Notion of ſpiritual and heavenly Advantages. Theſe will convince us of what poor Account all worldly Enjoyments ſhould be in our Eſteem: How very little, how mere a Nothing they are; how hard and hazardous to be attained; how uncertain the Preſervation of them, and how full of Trouble and anxious Care, even while we have them. And who would be fond of that, which can neither be got, nor loſt, no nor kept neither, without Fear, and Sorrow, and perpetual Sollicitude? Surely then the Happineſs of Man does *not conſiſt in the Abundance of the Things, which he poſſeſſeth.* 'Tis ſenſleſs and abſurd to think it can. Luke xii. 15. And if no Proportion of worldly Goods, though never ſo large, can exempt us from Miſery; then a competent Meaſure of them ought to ſatisfie us. For Miſerable we muſt be with leſs or more. The very living here upon Earth, without any additional Calamity, would make us inevitably ſo. The more a Man deſires and labours to be like God, the leſs agreeable reliſh he hath of Life; becauſe he is ſo much more ſenſible, more thoroughly convinced, of the Frailty and Corruption of Humane Nature. For what is this Viciſſitude, this daily Round of Eating and Drinking, Sleeping and Waking, Wearineſs and Reſt, and the many other Neceſſities which the Condition of Mortality enſlaves us to? Doubtleſs it is a mighty Burden and Affliction, to Men whoſe Minds are wholly fixed upon higher things, and whoſe only Ambition it is to get above Sin and Infirmity.

For the Diſtreſſes and Wants of the outward Man are a ſore Hindrance and great Oppreſſion to the in-

ward; And we ſhall not perhaps injure *David*'s Senſe, by ſuppoſing even theſe included in that Petition, where he begs of God to *deliver him out of his Troubles*. But wretched are They indeed, who are not ſenſible of their Wretchedneſs; And yet more ſo ſtill are thoſe vain People, who are even in love with it; Who dote upon this mortal Life, which expoſes them to it; and cannot think of parting with it at any rate, even when in ſuch uncomfortable Circumſtances, that all their Time and Care is ſcarce ſufficient, to furniſh them with Proviſions neceſſary for the ſupport of it: And yet theſe infatuated Creatures are content to lay themſelves out upon Toil and Trouble; and, might they but be ſuffered to continue here for ever, could diſpence with any Concern for God and Goodneſs, and willingly forego the Hopes and everlaſting Happineſs of a Heavenly Kingdom.

Pſal. xxv. 17.

O fooliſh and ſlow of Heart, to underſtand and believe your true Intereſt! How deep are you immerſed in Fleſh and Senſe? How ſottiſhly deluded with Droſs, and fond of Vanities which cannot profit? Have you no Notion left of any thing but Body? No Regard for a future and enduring Subſtance? Raiſe your Affections up to nobler Enjoyments, and diſengage them from thoſe groſs, thoſe empty Objects, which, if you ſtill perſiſt in the Love and Purſuit of, you will one Day be taught, by ſad Experience, how Poor and Deſpicable they really are, and how Unworthy all that eager Concern you have thrown away upon them. Be perſwaded then by Reaſon and Religion, and do not provoke God to convince you by Torments and too late Remorſe, of how fatal Conſequence the Love of this World is to all that are immoderately fond of it. View well thoſe Illuſtrious Patterns of Mortification and Heavenly-mindedneſs, which the Primitive Saints and Favourites of Chriſt have ſet you. Theſe great

great good Men had ſmall regard to the Pleaſures of Senſe, and glittering Gayeties of this World, but kept their Eyes and Hearts intent upon eternal Joys: Theſe were their Hope, their Delight, the earneſt and only Longing of their Souls; And therefore the Only one, leſt if their Affections were at all divided, the Love of the Things that are ſeen ſhould faſten down their Hearts to mean and earthly Objects, and hinder them from ſoaring up on high to the infinitely more precious Things that are not ſeen.

This is indeed a Work of Pains and Time; but let not that Conſideration drive you to deſpair of attaining an heavenly Temper of Mind. The Undertaking is great, 'tis true; and the Time allowed for it but ſhort; but ſtill this ſhort Space is enough, if you will take care to make the beſt of it. Up then, and be doing; do not purpoſe well to Day, and put of the Execution to a farther Day, but rather argue your ſelf into Action by ſuch Reflections as theſe. This very Inſtant is the proper Time; This the Seaſon of Amendment, and Fighting the good Fight. It is by Hardſhip and Suffering, that Men recommend themſelves to the Acceptance and Favour of God. He hath ordained, that Fire and Water, Diſtreſs and Tribulation ſhould be the Way that leads to Refreſhment and true Bliſs. Without ſome Violence upon thy ſelf Sin cannot be ſubdued, nor evil Cuſtoms broken. Without ſome Uneaſineſs and Pain we cannot live; And, while we carry this Body of Fleſh about us, theſe will make an inſeparable part of the Burden. We wiſh indeed for Eaſe and untroubled Satisfaction; but, as the Condition of Mankind ſtands at preſent, we wiſh in Vain: For, in loſing the Innocence of our Nature, we loſt our Happineſs too; and as both left us, ſo both muſt be reſtored, together. Patience is now become a neceſſary Virtue, and we muſt be content to wait the ſeaſon of God's Mercy: when he ſhall

fully repair our Breaches, heal our Infirmities, put a Period to our Unrighteouſneſs, abſolve the Guilt, blot out the Remembrance of them, and cauſe Mortality to be ſwallowed up of Life.

In the mean time, it cannot methinks but be a mighty Mortification, to conſider, how exceeding prone this frail Nature of ours is to Sin. To Day you confeſs your Sins to God, and to Morrow you act thoſe very Sins over again, which you lamented but the Day before. This Hour you reſolve to be watchful and take good heed to all your Ways; and the very next Hour you run on as giddily and raſhly as ever; forget your Reſolutions, and ſtand more Self-condemned than if you had never reſolved at all. So great Reaſon is there for Thinking very meanly of our ſelves, and diſclaiming all vain Confidences in any thing we are, or do. But theſe ſo ſudden and frequent Relapſes are not our Misfortunes, but our Faults; They are indeed the Conſequents of our Frailty, but that Frailty would not affect us to that degree, did not we contribute to it by our own Negligence, and Inconſtancy. And a ſmall Neglect will ſoon undo, what coſt much Time and Labour to effect; and what could not have been effected even ſo neither, had not Almighty God ſeconded our Endeavours with his Divine Aſſiſtance.

But if we cool ſo very quickly, and *cannot Watch one Hour*, what will become of us at laſt, and how ſhall we perſevere in Faithfulneſs unto the End? Wretched are we indeed, if we Faint and grow Weary, if we give out and ſeek Refreſhment, as if we were already Safe and in abſolute Peace; when we have ſcarce begun the Battel, and gained but little Ground in Holineſs and Reformation of Manners. Alas! we are as yet but raw Beginners; So far from complete Maſters in our Buſineſs, that we have ſtill need to learn and practice the very firſt Rules of Living over again; before

fore we can be ſo perfect as we wiſh and ought to be. Nor ſhould we diſdain to do ſo, if thoſe Condeſcenſions can prove of uſe to us.

CHAP. XXIII.

Meditations concerning Death.

SInce Life is of ſhort and uncertain Continuance, it highly concerns you to look about you, and take good heed how you imploy it. To Day the Man is vigorous, and gay, and flouriſhing, and to Morrow he is cut down, withered and gone. A very little time carries him out of our Sight, and a very little more out of our Remembrance. O the Hardneſs of Mens Hearts! O the wretched Stupidity! that fixes their whole Thoughts and Care upon the preſent, and will not be prevailed with to look before them, or bear any Regard to That which muſt come hereafter: Whereas in truth, every Work, and Word, and Thought, ought to be ſo ordered, as if it were to be our laſt; and we inſtantly to Dye and render an Account of it. Would we entertain our ſelves more with the Thoughts of Death, it would be leſs a Terrour to us: For, in proportion as our Lives amend, our Fears would abate; and a clear Conſcience will inable us to meet Death with undaunted Courage. However Fleſh and Frailty may impoſe upon us, yet, be aſſured, 'tis greater Wiſdom to be afraid of Sinning, than to be afraid of Dying; a greater Bleſſing to preſerve our Innocence, than to prolong our Lives. And whence is all this Fear and Anxiety? Is it becauſe we are not fit to Dye? But, if you are not fit to Day, how do you propoſe to be ſo to Morrow? Alas! to Morrow is uncertain, neither You, nor I, nor any Man can depend

upon it. Or if we could, yet what does it avail to Live, though it were much longer, when we by longer Living grow ſo little better? Aſſure your ſelf, long Life is far from being always a Bleſſing. Too many (God knows) are ſo far from growing holier, as they grow older, that the number of their Days only adds to the number of their Sins, and renders their Account more heavy hereafter.

Happy is that Man, who can comfort himſelf with having employed any one Day of his Life ſo perfectly well, as he might, and ought to, have done. Many reckon up the Years of their Converſion with great ſatisfaction, and think it a mighty matter, that they have ſo long abandoned the World and a vicious Courſe. And yet, when the time they boaſt of comes to be compared with the Improvements they have made, how ſhamefully little is the Good they have done? If Dying now be terrible, yet remember that Living longer may be dangerous; and many, many a Man finds but too great occaſion to wiſh, that it had pleaſed God to take him away ſooner. Happy therefore is He, who keeps the Hour of Death conſtantly in View: and from this Proſpect of what muſt come, takes care to reconcile himſelf to it, and to put his Soul into a proper Temper for it, when it does come.

If you attend at any time upon a Death-bed; and ſee another in his panting Agonies; conſider that this Friend is gone the ſame way where you muſt ſhortly follow him. In the Morning, queſtion whether you may live till Night; and when Night comes, do not too confidently promiſe your ſelf another Morning. Thus ſhall you be in a conſtant Expectation, and in a good Diſpoſition to dye. And beſure ſo to live always, that Death may never overtake you unprovided, nor its ſuddeneſt Approach be ſudden and ſurprizing, in reſpect of You. Many are ſnatched away in an inſtant, and dye when they were not in the leaſt aware

aware of it, for in *ſuch an Hour as we think not the Son of Man cometh.* Let not the Preparation I adviſe be neglected, as a melancholy unpleaſant Thing, ſuch as embitters Life, and damps Mens preſent Enjoyments; for be aſſured, Whatever Satisfaction you may take now, when that laſt Hour draws on, it will give you quite other Notions of the Matter. And the Reflections upon your paſt Improvidence and Neglect will be more bitter and afflicting then, than any the moſt ſollicitous Forecaſt for Dying well, can poſſibly be in the mean time. Matth. xxiv. 44.

O how Wiſe, how Happy is that Man, who makes it his daily Care to be ſuch while he Liveth, as he deſires to be found when he comes to Dye! And we may cheriſh a good Hope and great Aſſurance of leaving the World to our Comfort and infinite Advantage, if, while we continue in it, we can bring our ſelves to neglect and deſpiſe it: If we be zealous to improve in Virtue; in love with Diſcipline and Mortification; if we attend to the Exerciſe of Repentance; if we be of an humble and obedient Diſpoſition; content to deny our ſelves, and ready to undergo any Hardſhip for Chriſt's ſake. But if theſe Qualifications be neceſſary, they are neceſſary to be attained in Health. For then a Man is in a Condition to ſtrive, and to exert himſelf; but, when Sickneſs is upon him, it is a great Queſtion, what he will be able to do, or whether any thing at all. Whatever the generality of the World may imagine, who put off their great Work till ſuch improper Seaſons; yet ſure it is that few, but very few, are reformed by a ſick Bed. And They who deferr their Repentance and Amendment till then, ſeldom, alas! repent as they ought, or are amended in good earneſt.

Depend not upon the Aſſiſtance of Your Relations and Acquaintance. Nor cheriſh an Imagination ſo vain, as that their Prayers hereafter can effect, what You never endeavoured to effect here. Theſe can do you no

Service; But if they could, yet when once gone, you will be forgotten much ſooner than you are willing to believe. And why ſhould You reſt upon Their Care, when you cannot be prevailed with for your Own? Can it be ſuppoſed They ſhould be more concerned for your Salvation, than You, whoſe proper Intereſt it is? Allowing then, that theſe could do you good, yet even thus 'tis better you ſhould do your own Buſineſs; better, in regard of the Perſon, and better, in regard of the Time; For *now* is the Seaſon of Acceptance, *now* is the Day of Salvation. And therefore this Moment is fitteſt for your Purpoſe: The ſooner you change the better: Live then while you may; and begin from the preſent Minute to live ſo, that you may live for ever. For if you ſuffer the happy Opportunity to ſlip through your Hands, you will wiſh for it afterwards, when it is too late; and may perhaps be reduced to ſuch Circumſtances, that One Day, One Hour, for making your Peace with God may not be obtained, no, not when you would gladly give, were it at your diſpoſal, the whole World to purchaſe it.

Conſider then, my Friend and Fellow-Chriſtian, conſider what a Riſque you run by your Delays: Think, what Miſery and Danger, what Confuſion and Deſpair it is now in your Power to prevent, by living like a Man that remembers he muſt Dye. And therefore ſo ſpend every Hour, that when your laſt draws on, you may receive it with Joy and Hope, inſtead of Fear and Aſtoniſhment. Learn *now* to Dye daily, to Dye to Sin and the World, that you may then begin to Live with Chriſt. Learn *now* to deſpiſe all here below, that you may then be diſengaged, and at perfect liberty, to leave all and follow Chriſt. Subdue your Body *Now* by Mortification and Self-denyal, and you ſhall then have great Boldneſs in the Day of Tribulation.

Does

Does any Confidence of long Life encourage you to deferr putting this good Advice in Execution ſpeedily? Nay, but reflect, fond Man, how little you can promiſe your ſelf one poor ſingle Day. How many Inſtances have you before your Eyes, or freſh in your Remembrance, of Perſons miſerably deluded and diſappointed in this Hope, and hurried out of the Body without any warning at all? How often have you been ſurpriſed with the News of This Friend being run through, Another drowning croſſing the Water, a Third breaking his Neck by a Fall, a Fourth fallen down dead at Table, or choaked with his Meat, a Fifth ſeized with an Apoplex at Play, a Sixth burnt in his Bed, a Seventh murthered, an Eighth killed by Thieves, a Ninth ſtruck with Lightning, or Blaſting, or Peſtilence, a Tenth ſwallowed up in an Earthquake. Such vaſt variety of Deaths ſurround us, and ſo fleeting a Shadow is the Life of Man.

And, if any of theſe happen to be Your caſe, Who ſhall help? Who can ſave you, when the precious Opportunity is fled and loſt? Be doing then betimes; for, though you cannot ſo much as gueſs at the Hour and manner of your own Death, yet ſafe you are, or may be, if you will provide againſt it. Uſe Time then while you have it; make haſt to be Rich towards God, and let Religion and your own Salvation be your Chief, your Only Concern. *Make your ſelf Friends* while you may, *who when you fail may receive you into everlaſting Habitations.* Luke xvi. 9.

Behave your ſelf as a Stranger and Pilgrim upon Earth, and intangle not your Thoughts in Matters, which do not belong to you. For Sojourners are not Proprietors, and therefore ſuch ſhould keep their Minds looſe and free, and not ſettle their Affections upon things, which they are leaving very ſhortly: Raiſe your Soul to God, and let it not dwell there, where you *have no continuing* Hebr. xiii. 14.

City.

City. Look up to that which is ſo, and ſend your Prayers, and Tears, and earneſt Deſires before you thither; that when God calls, you may readily follow in Perſon, and make a happy Exchange of this Miſerable World for a better.

Chap. XXIV.

Of the Laſt Judgment, and the Eternal Puniſhment of Ungodly Men.

Whatſoever thou takeſt in hand, remember the End, and thou ſhalt never do amiſs, ſays the wiſe Son of *Sirach*. And certainly this would prove a moſt uſeful Direction, if we by the End underſtand that laſt great Account, which will one Day be required of all our Actions. For how powerful, how happy a Reſtraint ſhould we live under, did we but ſeriouſly reflect, and conſtantly ask our ſelves, how we ſhall dare to ſtand before that ſtrict and righteous Judge, to whom *all Hearts are open, all Deſires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid*; One, who cannot, like other Judges, be diverted from the ſteady Courſe of Juſtice; blinded by Bribes or Preſents, or ſoftned by ſubtle Extenuations, or impoſed upon by feigned Excuſes, and ſtudied Evaſions; but who weighs all Perſons and Cauſes by the eternal Standard of Equity and Truth. Ah wretched Guilty Creature! Ah ſtupid Unthinking Sinner! that trembleſt at the Frown of a Man like thy ſelf, and canſt not fear that Bar, where nothing can turn to thy Prejudice but open and notorious Faults! How wilt thou appear at this Tribunal, or what Plea canſt thou urge in Bar of Sentence, to Him who needs no Evidence, but is himſelf privy to thy moſt concealed Impieties? Doſt thou

Eccluſ. vii. 36.

thou know this, and yet go on unconcerned how thou ſhalt eſcape the Terrors of that dreadful Day? Without thy own Care, eſcape thou canſt not: For This Judgment is univerſal; All Mankind muſt ſtand upon their Deliverance; Every one muſt bear his own Burden; and every one's Burden is more than enough for himſelf; ſo that no Man will be in a Condition of Aſſiſting another. To expect any Advantage, any Atonement then, is moſt ſenſleſs; Thou only canſt prevent thy own Deſtruction, and this Life is the only Time of preventing it. Thy holy Labours now will turn to good Account; Thy pious Mournings move Compaſſion, thy Prayers and Groans enter the Ears of God, and melt him into Mercy: The meek and patient Man will then be conſidered for his conſtant Suffering and invincible Charity. The Grief he now conceives for Wrongs is more for the Wickedneſs and Guilt of the Perſon who does them, than for any Inconvenience brought upon himſelf; and this Diſpoſition will mitigate his own Offence. He heartily forgives, and prays that God would forgive his Enemies, and this entitles him to the Forgiveneſs of his own Treſpaſſes. He is more eaſily provoked to Pity, than to Anger; and ſhall be dealt with accordingly, by a God Long-ſuffering, ſlow to Wrath, and ſparing when Men deſerve Puniſhment. He often treats his Body with Severity and Violence, and continues the rigorous Diſcipline, till the Fleſh be effectually ſubdued by the Spirit; and therefore good Amends ſhall be made him for theſe voluntary Sufferings, and the neglected Pleaſures of Senſe be liberally recompenced by the abundance of Heavenly and Intellectual Joys. But then 'tis plain theſe good Qualities which miniſter an Entrance into that Bliſs, muſt be attained as ſoon as we can poſſibly: This preſent State of Mortality is the only Scene of Action and Improvement; and ſince this Scene ſo ſuddenly may change, we are not

not ſafe in the delay of one Moment. This is in truth our Caſe, but we are loath to underſtand it; and ſo inordinately fond of ſenſual Delights, that we even take a pleaſure in impoſing upon our ſelves; and by the moſt fatal of all Infatuations, cheriſh and gratifie our Bodies, at the Expence, and extreme Hazard of our Souls.

And what is the Effect of this, but heaping up more Fewel for Everlaſting Flames to feed upon? For our Sins and Luſt kindle and blow up thoſe Fires, and the more heinous and impetuous theſe are, the fiercer and more furiouſly thoſe will be ſure to burn. For as the Torments of ungodly Wretches ſhall there be exquiſite, for their Degree, ſo ſhall they for their Kind and Quality be ſuited and proportioned to the Sins of each particular Perſon; and ſo contrived, as to be moſt ſenſibly afflicting and painful to the reſpective Tempers and Complections of Men, the Habits they have contracted, and the Appetites they have indulged. The Lazy and Stupid ſhall be awakened and rouzed into Senſe by ſharp Scourges and burning Stings. The Glutton and Drunkard gnawed with inſatiable Hunger; and parched with unquenchable Thirſt. The Nice and Delicate, who propoſed no Happineſs here to themſelves, but Luxury, and Pleaſure; ſhall then be ſtrangled with the noiſom Vapours of flaming Pitch and ſtinking Sulphur. The Envious and Diſcontented ſhall howl perpetually like mad Dogs. The Proud and Vain-glorious ſhall be confounded with Shame and Contempt. The Covetous ſhall pine away with extreme Penury and Want; and no One Vice ſhall eſcape a Torture, exactly fitted to make its Indulger the moſt Miſerable, that it is poſſible for him to be. In a word, One ſingle Hour in thoſe diſmal Pains and Horrours ſhall be more inſupportable, than whole Ages of that Uneaſineſs, which wicked Men here have ſo irreconcileable an Averſion to

to ſubmit to, for mortifying their Vanities, and amending their Lives.

For, (which is of all others the laſt and dreadfulleſt Aggravation,) thoſe Miſeries and Tortures have no End, no Refreſhment, no Intermiſſion: But the ſharpeſt Afflictions we endure in this Life will quickly have a Period, They have their Intervals of Eaſe and Comfort; and thoſe Sorrows, which we feel upon a Religious Account, are largely recompenced with Spiritual Conſolations, and ſweet Peace of Mind. Do not then grudge a little preſent Grief; but mourn earneſtly for thy Sins, and bend thy utmoſt Thought and Care to the Subduing and Reforming them; that this ſhort Anxiety may deliver thee from eternal Deſpair and Anguiſh unconceiveable; and thoſe few Tears of Repentance may ſecure to thee a Portion of everlaſting Joy with the Bleſſed.

Oh happy Reverſe of all their Griefs and Sufferings, which the Righteous ſhall find in that Day? when they ſhall ſtand full of Hope and humble Confidence before that Judgment-ſeat, from which their Haughty and Mercileſs Oppreſſours, confounded with Fear and amazed with Guilt, ſhall ſtrive and wiſh in vain to hide their trembling Heads. When he, who now ſtands tamely at the Bar of Men, and innocently ſuffers, ſhall then be advanced to a Throne, and placed among the Saints and Martyrs, to aſſiſt at the Tryal of his, once inſulting, Judges. When the Poor and Meek ſhall have great Boldneſs, while the Proud and Great Sinner quakes at the Preſence of God and the Lamb. When that Piety and Godly Fear, that Abſtinence and ſevere Virtue, that patient Enduring for Chriſt's ſake, which is now thought juſt Matter of Deriſion and Contempt, and counted Folly and Religious Madneſs, ſhall then be acknowledged by its moſt Satyrical Scorners to be indeed the True, the Only Wiſdom. When the Remembrance of paſs'd Miſeries ſhall be ſweet, and They,

whoſe

whoſe wicked Malice exerciſed ſuch Patience, ſhall be ſtruck Dumb with ſad Remorſe and Bitterneſs of Soul. When all, who devoted themſelves to God and his Service ſhall be tranſported with Raptures of Joy, and all thoſe who diſregarded or deſpiſed them, ſhall Weep and Lament. When the Afflicted and Perſecuted ſhall bleſs his bitter Cup, and feel more refined, more ſubſtantial Delight from it, than ſenſual Pleaſures or uninterrupted Proſperity could ever bring to the moſt Voluptuous and Fortunate: When the plain Dreſs of the Humble, and Sackcloth of the Penitent ſhall ſhine glorious as the Sun; and all the gay Pomp and gliſtering Jewels of the proud and gaudy Sinner ſhall be trampled under Foot like Dung: When the Cottage ſhall take place of the Court, Patience appear more eligible than the moſt boundleſs and arbitrary Power; the honeſt Obedience of an humble Faith, more Wiſe, than the niceſt Cavils of the ſubtleſt Wit; and a good Conſcience more uſeful Learning, than the moſt elaborate Syſtems of Philoſophy: When the Contempt of Riches ſhall approve it ſelf the greateſt Treaſure; Devout Prayer the moſt delicious Entertainment; Silence and Caution the beſt Converſation: When Good Works ſhall plead better than the moſt accurate Eloquence, Alms prove the moſt prevailing Advocate, Self-denyal the moſt exalted Pleaſure, and the Conqueſt of ill Habits the moſt glorious Triumph.

If then this be, (and this moſt aſſuredly is) a true Repreſentation of that deciſive Day: If this the different Fate and Effect of theſe ſo very different Perſons and Practices; Conſider, I conjure thee, the Circumſtances of thoſe Damned. And harden thy ſelf from this Reflection, to endure a *Little* now, when *That little* will ſecure thee againſt enduring infinitely more hereafter. Make tryal of thy ſelf, and if the ſlight Difficulties of a religious Life ſeem tedious and tireſom; turn the Argument againſt thy ſenſual Inclination,

tion, and think, how one who ſinks under theſe, will be able to dwell with exquiſite and everlaſting Torments. Nor is this a trifling needleſs Enquiry, but abſolutely neceſſary, and of mighty moment. For Matters are ſo ordered, that perfect Eaſe can be no Man's Portion in *both* Worlds: They who chooſe their good Things here cannot have them hereafter too; nor ſhall any Man who indulges Senſe and Pleaſure upon Earth, Rejoyce and Reign with Chriſt in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Suppoſe then, that, from your Entrance into the Body, to this very Day, you had enjoyed the utmoſt your Heart could poſſibly deſire, of all which this World calls Happineſs: Honours, Riches, Pleaſures, without Check, or Stint, or Interruption. Yet what Good would all this do you, if it ſhould pleaſe God juſt now to ſtrike you with Death? Do not you plainly ſee, without my proſecuting this Argument any farther, that all below is Vanity and meer Nothing, and that the Love of God and a religious Life is the only thing, which can ſtand you in any ſtead? This will ſtick by you, when all the reſt forſake you. This is neither deſtroyed by Death, nor afraid of Puniſhment, but Triumphs over both; fills the Man with Confidence and joyful Expectation at the dreadful Day of Judgment; and ſets him above all the Terrours and diſmal Apprehenſions of Hell and its Tortures. But then, This is the peculiar Priviledge of the Servants of God; for, how is it poſſible for the Men who practice and delight in Wickedneſs, to think of Death and Judgment, without Fear and Perplexity of Heart? How ſhould they enjoy Quiet, and be eaſie in their Minds, if they think at all what is coming apace upon them? Let then the Love of God prevail over that of Sin; but if thou art not yet perfect enough to be acted by this noble Principle, Let at leaſt the Love of *thy ſelf* reclaim thee, and the Fear of Hell re-

reſtrain and deterr thee from a Courſe, which muſt end at laſt in thy utter and inevitable Ruine. This, ſays the Scripture, is *the beginning of Wiſdom*, for he who is Proof againſt the Fear of God, cannot perſevere in any thing that is Good; As having no manner of Principle that can ſave him, no Curb upon his Mind that can awe, or hold him in, from running headlong into the Snares of the Devil.

Pſal. cxi. 10.

CHAP. XXV.

Of Zeal in the Reformation of our Lives.

BE *fervent in Spirit, ſerving the Lord*, ſays the Apoſtle. And ſuch indeed it highly concerns every one to be in His Service. For what is the End we propoſe, by dedicating our ſelves in ſolemn Vows to Chriſt? Or to what purpoſe do we renounce the World and its Vanities, but that theſe ſacred Ties may engage our utmoſt Watchfulneſs and Diligence to conſecrate our Perſons and Actions, to conform our ſelves to the Image of God, by living to him, and like him, and much above the rate of common Men? Let not therefore theſe good Reſolutions cool upon your Hands; but be zealous in Piety and Virtue. Conſider, that You ſhall ſhortly receive an ample Recompence for all your holy Labours, and ſee a happy End of Grief, and Fear, and Hardſhip. Be content with *Travel and Pain* for a very little while, and *you ſhall be ſure to find Reſt, and Peace, and Joy to your Souls. The Yoke is eaſie, and the Burthen light*, but *the Weight of Glory is far more exceeding and eternal.* Be but You careful to diſcharge your part, and then you need

Rom. xii. 11.

Matth. xi. 28, 30.

2 Cor. iv. 16.

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never doubt God's making good his. Support and encourage your ſelf with the full Aſſurance of obtaining the Crown, but take heed that Aſſurance do not degenerate into Preſumption; nor the proſpect of Bliſs, which ſhould excite a more active and cheerful Obedience, become an occaſion of ſpiritual Security and Sloth.

I remember an Inſtance of a Perſon irreſolute and wavering in the Concerns of his Soul, divided between Hope and Fear, who in his Prayers was earneſtly entreating, to be aſſured of his own Perſeverance; and expreſſing how happy he ſhould think himſelf, could he but be ſatisfied in this Point. Whereupon he was immediately anſwered from within, *Well, and ſuppoſing you could be aſſured of this, how would you proceed then? Do but act now, as you would think your ſelf obliged to do in that caſe, and never queſtion your perſevering.* This comfortable Reply ſettled his Mind, and, inſtead of indulging any curious Enquiries into Events, or anxious Doubts concerning the Succeſs of his Endeavours, he immediately applied himſelf to conſider what God expected from him, and ſet about the Performance of That, without more to do. *Truſt in the Lord, and be doing Good*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *commit thy Way to Him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs.* Pſal. xxxvii. 5, 6.

The great and common Obſtacle to vigorous Virtue, is the dreadful Notion Men form to themſelves of the Difficulties attending it, and how laborious a thing Religion is. And true it is; Exalted Piety will coſt many a ſore Conflict. But even this Conſideration may be ſome Encouragement too; when we conſider, that the Hardſhip of the Undertaking, and the Violence of the Oppoſition, add to the Glory of the Fight; and entitle the Conquerour to a Crown ſo much brighter, as the Toil and Hazard of the Day he won, was greater. For the more a Man ſubdues himſelf

ſelf, and does Honour to the Divine Grace by rendring it victorious over Fleſh and Blood; the larger Meaſures of that Grace he ſhall obtain from God, and become more exemplary in the World.

There are not, 'tis confeſt, in every Man, the ſame Paſſions, or not the ſame Degrees of them, to maſter and mortifie. But though a Man whoſe Affections are vehement, and his Diſpoſition by Nature or Cuſtom more ſtubborn and averſe to Virtue, hath more to make his way through; Yet, if this Man's Reſolution be firmer, and his Vigour be proportionably greater, he ſhall be able to advance farther, than others of a quieter Temper, and leſs rebellious Paſſions; if that Sedateneſs at the ſame time diſpoſe them to Eaſe and Inactivity.

Now in this Undertaking, Two Things there are, of mighty moment for promoting it. The *firſt* is, To obſerve the Tendencies of one's Temper and Conſtitution, and take care to bend Nature the contrary way; by keeping aloof off from all thoſe Temptations and Occaſions of Sinning, with which we feel our ſelves moſt eaſily beſet, and ſtrongly inclined to comply. The *other*, to diſcover our peculiar Defects, and labour with all our Might to attain thoſe Virtues, which we chiefly want.

And, As this Knowledge of Our Own Frailties and Neceſſities, is greatly inſtrumental to our Improvement, ſo we ſhall do well to profit by what we ſee in Others; and to be particularly concern'd for avoiding and ſubduing thoſe Habits, which we find moſt uſual and offenſive, in them with whom we Converſe. For the Commonneſs of any Ill thing is ſo far from extenuating the Blame of thoſe who copy after it, that it is the direct contrary; and ſuch Examples ſhould be lookt upon, as Marks which diſcover to us where the Rocks and Sands lye; ſuch as are ſet to warn us off, not to invite us in. Indeed a wiſe and good Man will turn Examples, of all ſorts, to his own Advantage.

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The Good he will make his Patterns, and ſtrive to equal or excel them. The Bad he will by all means avoid; or if by Reflection the Deformity of his Neighbour's Actions happen to repreſent that of his own, he will be ſure to do ſo no more; and think it a happy occaſion, that he is thus grown Wiſer by the Folly of others. For we often ſee and judge that in the Deportment of thoſe we converſe with, which too near a Light will not let us Diſcern, or Partiality let us Condemn, in our own. And this ſhould make us cautious, when we remember that the Eyes of others are as ſharp as critical Obſervers, as ſevere Judges of Us, and all we do, as Ours can poſſibly be of Them. From this univerſal Diſpoſition to obſerve and judge, proceeds no doubt that pleaſing Approbation, or vehement Diſlike, of Good, and Bad, Examples. For what indeed gives us a more ſenſible Satisfaction, than the ſeeing Men in every point agreeable to their Character? When They, who call themſelves by the Name of Chriſt, and pretend in a peculiar manner to belong and be reſign'd up to him, are eminent in good Works and heavenly Diſpoſitions; When they ſubmit entirely to his Yoke, and think nothing too much to do or ſuffer in Obedience to his Will; how charming, how delightful a Sight is this! And again, how offenſive, how very ſhocking, when They, who make the ſame outward Profeſſion, ſhall Diſhonour and Defile it by a ſcandalous and profligate Converſation; and, inſtead of that ſevere, that ſpiritual and heavenly Life, to which their very Name, and the Pattern of their Maſter obliges them, abandon themſelves to all manner of Exceſs, and wallow in the moſt brutiſh and deteſtable Pollutions? But, even where Men do not degenerate into all this Beaſtlineſs, where Cares and Buſineſs of the World divert and draw them off from better Employments, 'Tis unſeemly to others, and of ill conſequence to themſelves, to neglect their proper Con-

cern, and engage their Thoughts and Time in Matters foreign to their main Design.

Quicken therefore your self up to Duty, by the remembrance of your Station, who you are, and what you have obliged your self to be. Bear constantly about you a lively Idea of Christ crucified. Consider carefully his Life, and let the Perfection of That shame you into the reforming your own. Your own, I say, whose very *Baptism represents your Profession*, which is, *to follow the Example of your Saviour, and to be made like unto him*; and yet after so many Years being called a Christian, you are still too far from being one, if *Dying to Sin and Living to Righteousness, as your Jesus dyed and rose again for you*, be that which makes a Christian, and distinguishes him from other Men. If Persons dedicated to Piety and Virtue would but with due Attention fix their Thoughts upon the Actions and Sufferings of Christ, this single Subject would furnish them with Instructions and Motives, abundantly sufficient for their purpose: St. *Paul* we see determined to know nothing but *Jesus Christ and him Crucified*, and this indeed, truly known, is the best, the most useful, and most comprehensive Learning.

1 Cor. xi.

This fires Men with an eager holy Zeal, and renders them not only exact, but cheerful in their Duty; it makes them perform what he commands with Diligence, and suffer all that he ordains with Patience and Contentedness. Whereas a negligent and lukewarm Christian conspires against himself; his Life is one perpetual Torment, for want of entire Resignation and fervent Love. The Tryals and Afflictions bear hard upon his Spirit, and the Good he attempts is strained and against the Grain. He feels not the support of spiritual Comforts; he knows he must not have recourse to Worldly ones, or, if he might, They will not do his Business; and so he is left destitute of all. For

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by tranſgreſſing the Rules of Chriſtian Diſcipline, he hazards the Safety of his Soul; And by ſeeking Relief in inconvenient Liberties, he creates freſh Torment to himſelf: becauſe Theſe cannot ſatisfie his Conſcience, but will be ſure to leave ſome Diſpleaſure and Bitterneſs behind them. And who can ever be eaſie, who is reproached with his own ill Conduct, and chooſes a Remedy worſe than the Diſtemper?

To this Pattern ſet us by Chriſt himſelf, it will be of great uſe to add thoſe of the Apoſtles, and other eminent Lights in the Church heretofore. Theſe will convince us, what Excellencies mere Men are capable of; and if we heartily aſpire after their Perfections, we ought not to diſtruſt God's Aſſiſtance; but may confidently promiſe our ſelves, that an equal Degree of Zeal will be ſupported by an equal Meaſure of Grace and Strength. Obſerve then their Auſterities, their fervent Prayers and heavenly Meditations, obſerve the great and happy Efficacy of them, in raiſing thoſe holy Perſons above the World and its Temptations, and rendring their Converſation all Heavenly and Divine, even whilſt upon Earth. It were indeed a deſirable Thing, that we could ſo wholly abſtract our ſelves from Fleſh and Senſe, that the Praiſes of God and Attendance upon his Commands, the Contemplation of his Glories and the raviſhing Satisfactions of devout Minds, might be our conſtant and only Employment. And happy ſhould we be, if the neceſſary Cares of Life gave no Diſtraction to our Thoughts, no Interruption to thoſe holy Exerciſes. But Theſe are Charms and Joys reſerved for a future and better State; We cannot here be ſo refined, we cannot be excuſed from the Incumbrances of the Body, and its inſeparable Frailties and Neceſſities. And therefore the Virtue proper to our preſent Condition is of another Nature. Uſe theſe worldly Comforts we may, but we muſt not place our Happineſs in them; live upon them our Bodies

muſt, but our Souls ſhould reliſh nothing but God. Whatever his Providence thinks fit for us we are to receive with Meekneſs and Contentedneſs; as being well aſſured, that His Wiſdom *can*, and his Goodneſs *will* chooſe and ordain what is beſt. *In the Day of Proſperity we may rejoyce*, but that Joy muſt be ſo tempered with Gratitude and Moderation, as neither to ſwell into Inſolence and Pride, nor to engage our Affections in the Love of the World. *In the Day of Adverſity we are to conſider*, and entertain the moſt calamitous Accidents, without Murmuring or Diſcontent. In every Change of Circumſtances our Minds muſt be entirely reſigned to God; for He is all in all, Eternal and Unchangeable, Perfect and Happy in Himſelf, Abſolute and Sole Lord of the Univerſe; And every Creature is, and ought to be, entirely at his Diſpoſal.

But, though He be always the ſame, and can at any time do what is good in his ſight, yet this is by no means Our Caſe. Frail, and of ſhort Continuance is Our Character; and this ſhould excite our Diligence, *to work while it is Day, becauſe our Night cometh on apace, wherein no Man can work.* Conſider therefore you muſt dye; dye, you know not how ſoon; and be afraid leſt that fatal Hour overtake you, before the Buſineſs of Life be finiſhed. Remember that the Time once yours, can never be ſo again: The Wealth of both the *Indies* cannot redeem one ſingle Opportunity, which you have once let ſlip; and therefore lay faſt hold on all that offer, and ſuffer no Hour to ſlide by without its due Improvement.

John ix.

Virtue can never be attained without great Pains and Diligence; and, if you cool and linger in this Purſuit, the moment that you gain not ground, you loſe it. For the Affairs of our Souls can never ſtand at one ſtay; but, as oft as we favour our ſelves in point of Duty, we decline and fall back again toward Sin, or at leaſt into an Indiſpoſition toward Goodneſs.

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But if we cheriſh our Zeal, and conſtantly blow up its holy Fires by a vigorous Attendance upon our Buſineſs, we ſhall ſoon feel the Comfort of this kindly Warmth; and all the Difficulties we found or formed to our ſelves, will wear off quickly. God will give more Grace to him that uſes what he gave formerly; and Virtue every day will diſcloſe her Charms, and make us more in love with her. Then it is, that the wiſe Man's Deſcription is experimentally made good to us, *That her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.* Prov. iii. I readily acknowledge the Attempt I am now adviſing, to be exceeding laborious and great: No bodily Toil is to be compared to it; nor any Conqueſt over temporal Enemies ſo hazardous and expenſive, as that which we gain upon our ſelves, and the Adverſary of Souls. But as the Difficulty exceeds, ſo does the Benefit and Glory likewiſe. This Field muſt be fought, and won, or we are loſt for ever; And He, who does not inure himſelf to vanquiſhing, by ſubduing leſs Temptations, will never be able to grapple with more violent, and trying Ones; and Infirmities once yielded to, grow inſenſibly to ſtubborn Habits of Vice. This is a daily Warfare, and we may daily reap the Fruits of it. For every Night will crown us with freſh Lawrels, and the Reflection upon a Day well ſpent, furniſh our Joys more pleaſing than ten thouſand Triumphs. Since therefore every Day's Behaviour is of ſuch mighty Conſequence, in giving a Turn to our ſpiritual Affairs; beware leſt any paſs unprofitably. Watch continually over thy ſelf, and let not this neceſſary Fervour abate, for want of Care to cheriſh and excite it. Remember, that your own Salvation is the Truſt committed to your Charge; a Truſt of Importance greater than the whole World; and therefore, whatever becomes of the reſt, do You ſecure One. To admoniſh and reprove your Brethren, while you overlook your ſelf, is a moſt prepoſterous

Courſe; 'tis neglecting your own Province, and invading another Man's. You have no right, to take the Mote out of *their* Eye, till the Beam be first caſt out of *your own*. If then you would eſcape the Cenſure of Hypocriſie, begin at Home to reform, and be ſure to do that effectually. For the greater Violence you are content to put upon your own Inclinations, and the ſorer Conflicts you undergo, the more meritorious is your Virtue, and the more abundant will be your Joy.

Matth. viii.

The End of the First Book.

OF

E. Book. 2. page. 77.

OF THE IMITATION OF Jeſus Chriſt.

The Second Book.

Chap. I.

The Life of the Spiritual Man.

THE Kingdom of God is within you, ſays our Bleſſed Lord. Betake thy ſelf then entirely to God, love *him* with all thy Heart, and all thy Soul, and bid a final Adieu to this wretched World, and thou ſhalt find ſweet Content, and Comfort unſpeakable. Learn to deſpiſe theſe outward Vanities, and ſeek pure and ſpiritual Satisfactions; place all thy Hopes, thy Happineſs, thy Thoughts in Them, and thou ſhalt feel this Kingdom ſpring up and grow within thee. *For the Kingdom of God is Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*; A Joy, peculiar to the Saints, in which wicked and worldly-minded Men have no part. Chriſt will approach to thoſe that fly to him for Refuge, meet and embrace them in

Luke xvii. 21.

Rom. xiv. 17.

in his Arms, and fill them with his heavenly Conſolations. He knocks, and waits to come in, and only ſtays, till thou have ſwept and garniſh'd thy Soul, and prepared an Apartment, clean and fit for ſo pure ſo divine an Inhabitant. For all his Charms and Glories ſhine inward; They are not like the gaudy Pomps and glittering Outſides of earthly Ornaments, but lye deep in the Breaſts of his Saints; There is his Beauty, there his ſweet Converſation, there his raviſhing Comforts, there the Abundance of his Peace, and the Intimacy of his Friendſhip.

Come then, believing Soul; To Work, and employ all thy Diligence, to prepare thy Heart for thy Beloved; That heavenly Spouſe, who will not diſdain this poor and homely Manſion, and only asks thy Love, and Care to make it worthy of him. Hear his own gracious Promiſe, *If a Man love me, he will keep my Words, and my Father will love him, and We will come, and make our abode with him.* Make room then for this Bleſſed Gueſt; Caſt out the Croud of worldly Cares and Deſires. Admit no Partner in thy Breaſt, but reſerve thy whole Heart for this One Inhabitant. This One is enough, for He is all the World, And if thou haſt Him, thou haſt Riches, and Honour, and Plenty of every thing that is Good. He will be thy Maſter, thy Protector, thy Counſeller, thy Agent, thy Friend; Will take thy Cares upon himſelf, and manage all thy Concerns to the beſt Advantage; nor ſhalt thou need any other Aſſiſtant, or ask Relief from Men. For why indeed from Men? whoſe Power is ſo ſhort, and their Affections ſo inconſtant? They quickly change, and mock the Hopes of thoſe that depend upon their Kindneſs; But Chriſt endureth for ever, and is a ſure Help in all his Servant's Extremities. Suppoſing all the Sincerity and Zeal for our Service, that Man is capable of; yet ſtill he is but Man, mortal and frail, and cannot always have the

John xiv. 23.

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Ability, even when he hath moſt the Diſpoſition, to relieve and do us good. Since then ſo little Confidence is due to his Succours, the Concern ought not to be great, if he withdraw or deny them; if he oppoſe and grieve, and labour to do us harm. For This is frequently the Caſe; The Effect of a fickle Temper, that the very ſame Perſons, who to Day are our deareſt Friends, to Morrow ſhall be our bittereſt Enemies. And they who now are our moſt furious Adverſaries, within a little while come over to our Side. It cannot well be otherwiſe, in Perſons ſo unſettled, ſo liable to turn with every breath of Wind. Place then thy Hope and Truſt in Him alone, with *whom is no Variableneſs, neither ſhadow of Turning:* Let *him* be the only Object of thy Fear, and Love. In *him* thou art ſure to find a conſtant and powerful Friend; One, who will heartily eſpouſe thy Cauſe; and order Matters better, than thou thy ſelf, if left to thy own Choice, couldſt poſſibly do. Alas! thou haſt here no continuing City, but art a Stranger and Sojourner, and muſt expect to find no Settlement, till poſſeſt of, and united to Chriſt. James i. 17.

Why do thy anxious Thoughts look out for Eaſe and a fixed Happineſs, in a Place, which is not, cannot be thy Reſt? Thy Converſation ought to be in Heaven, for there is thy Home; and all Things here ſhould be no otherwiſe regarded, than as Refreſhments and Conveniences given to ſupport thee in thy Journey thither: Things in perpetual Motion, and ſuch as paſs away from thee; and Things, which thou thy ſelf art paſſing away from too, as faſt as Time and Mortality can carry thee. Do not then imagine, that They can ſtick by Thee, or Thou by Them; but look upon Them with an Eye of Indifference, and keep thy Soul diſengaged; For, if thou ſuffer them to faſten upon thy Affections, they will enſlave thy Mind, and turn to thy eternal Ruin. Aſſert then and preſerve thy

thy native Liberty, by raiſing thy Soul above this vain World, and fixing thy Deſires and Meditations upon the moſt High God; Converſe with Chriſt in Prayer, and let this be ſo conſtant, ſo intent, as to contract an intimate Familiarity with Him.

It may be, His Glories and Divine Excellencies are Objects too refined and lofty, for thy Contemplations to dwell upon with Reliſh and ſenſible Delight. But he hath condeſcended to thy mean Capacity, and, by becoming Man, afflicted Man, hath furniſhed us with Matter of Meditation, of a ſize with our Minds, while dwelling in Fleſh. Conſider then his Poverty, and Sufferings. And, if thou canſt not ſoar up ſo high as Chriſt ſitting on his Throne, behold him hanging on his Croſs. Take Sanctuary in his Stripes and Wounds, and Death; thoſe Stripes, by which the World is healed; That Death, by which Mankind live: And, if theſe be well attended to, they will adminiſter marvellous Strength and Comfort to thy Adverſities; Enable thee to bear Wrongs with Eaſe, Contempt with Patience, Calumny and Detraction with Content. What! Was the Son of God a Scorn of Men and an Outcaſt of the People? Was the King of Heaven reduced to Wants and Neceſſities upon Earth, and had not ſo much as *where to lay his Head?* Was He, who loved his Enemies ſo tenderly as even to die for them, forſaken by his Friends? Did Chriſt ſubmit cheerfully to endure, and to be deſpiſed? And doſt thou, wretched Sinner, murmur and complain, when Poverty or Contempt come upon thee? when thy Friends deſert, or thy Enemies ſlander thee? Did He undergo the Malice and *Contradiction of* Men, and doſt thou expect that all Men ſhould favour, and aſſiſt, and ſpeak of Thee with Honour? Nay, wretched Man, entertain not ſo vain a Hope. It cannot be; It is not fit it ſhould: For couldſt thou be exempted from Injuries and Afflictions, what

Luke ix. 58.

Hebr. xii. 3.

what Opportunity could there ever be for the Exerciſe of thy Patience? If nothing croſs ſhould happen in the whole Courſe of thy Life, how couldſt thou approve thy Friendſhip and Love for Chriſt; How expreſs thy Likeneſs to him? This the Apoſtle tells us, is the Condition, This the Way, that leads to Happineſs; And They who deſire to Reign with Chriſt, muſt not think much to ſuffer with him, and for him. 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

Oh! had we but, with *Thomas*, put *our Fingers into the Print of his Nails, and thruſt our Hands into his Side*; Had we but acquainted our ſelves with his Sufferings, by deep and ſerious Conſideration; and taſted indeed the aſtoniſhing Greatneſs of his Love; the Joys and Miſeries of this Life would ſoon become indifferent to us. Or rather, they would no longer be indifferent, but we ſhould even rejoyce in Tribulation, and triumph in the Oppoſition, and Shame, and wrongful Dealings of Men, which draw us to ſo much nearer and more lively Reſemblance of the Bleſſed Jeſus. For the Love of Chriſt teaches us to deſpiſe our ſelves; and They, who do ſo, will bear the Reproaches and Deſpiſings of others, with Eaſineſs and Temper. A Man, whoſe Soul is united to Chriſt in fervent Love, and who hath freed himſelf from Paſſions and worldly Sollicitudes: This Man, I ſay, is as it were ſpiritualized, can have recourſe to God without Diſtraction, lives in a manner by, and within, himſelf, nay, is raiſed above himſelf, and enjoys Heaven, while yet upon Earth. He that hath ſhook off the Fallacies and Prepoſſeſſions of Senſe, that ſees and judges things, not after the deceitful Meaſures of common Opinion, but by the Standard of Truth, and their own Nature; He is the Wiſe, the truly Learned Man; and taught this Wiſdom, not by Humane Methods, but by Inſtruction from above, from God the Fountain and Perfection of all Wiſdom. John xx.

This

This Man can never want Opportunities of enjoying, and improving, his Happineſs. The Interruptions, which common Men lament, cannot affect Him. For nothing can take him from himſelf; and ſo long as he hath his own Breaſt to retire into, he cannot be deprived of a fit Place, and proper Seaſon for any holy Exerciſe. If Buſineſs and the World at any time call him abroad, he always acts and converſes there with cautious Reſerve; and keeps it in his Power to recollect and retreat again at Pleaſure. Bodily Labour is no hindrance; for This employs but the leaſt part of him; The Cares of Life he never lays himſelf out upon; but ſutes his Temper to his preſent Circumſtances, and only ſtudies to keep his Mind eaſie and compoſed: The Unreaſonableneſs, and Folly, and unaccountable Perverſeneſs of other Mens Humors and Behaviour give him no diſturbance; for he is taken up with his own. In ſhort; Every Man finds more or leſs Vexation and Obſtruction in the Affairs of his Soul, as he engages himſelf more or leſs in the World; and chooſes or refuſes to make thoſe things his Care, which are not properly ſo.

A Man whoſe Mind is purified from the Droſs of Earth, and diſpoſed as it ought to God and heavenly Things, will find that every Accident of Life contributes to his Advantage. For the true Reaſon of our Paſſion and Diſquiet, when things fall out contrary to our Expectations or Deſires, is the want of that Reſignation and Temper, which never fails to compoſe the Spirits of Men mortified to themſelves and the World, and diſengaged from the Vanities, and falſe Appearances of Happineſs here below. For nothing ſo infects and defiles, ſo intangles and perplexes, a Man's Mind, as a ſordid Love of the Creatures. But when we can once prevail with our ſelves, to deſpiſe theſe trifling, theſe deluding Comforts without us, our Retirements into our own Breaſts will be frequent and

and free; Our Joys reſulting from them undiſturbed; and our Contemplations of Heaven and heavenly Things full of Rapture and Tranſport.

CHAP. II.

The Advantage of Humility.

BE not extremely ſollicitous, what Friends thou haſt to appear in thy Behalf, nor what Foes employ their Malice in creating thee Difficulty and Trouble; But let it be thy great Care to keep God thy Friend and Helper; and be ſure to preſerve a good Conſcience; for, ſo long as thy own Heart condemns thee not, God will not fail to plead thy Cauſe, and aſſiſt and bleſs thy righteous Undertakings. And thoſe, whom he receives into his peculiar Protection, no Wickedneſs or Spight ſhall be able to hurt. Suffer thou maiſt indeed, but provided thou learn to Suffer without Murmuring and Impatience, thou ſhalt certainly ſee the Salvation of God. And if This ſeem to tarry, yet wait for it; for He beſt knows the proper Seaſon of Deliverance, and therefore you ought entirely to reſt upon his wiſe Diſpoſal. Deliver no doubt he will. The relieving Men in Diſtreſs, and wiping off the Shame and Reproach of his Servants, being Acts by which God delights to ſignalize his Providence. But there is often reaſon, why the doing it ſhould be deferred; ſince the diſcovery of our Failings by other People, and the Reproofs we meet with upon their Account, have frequently a very happy Effect upon our Minds, and render them more modeſt and humble in their own Eſteem of themſelves.

And Humility is a Virtue of ſo general, ſo exceeding good Influence, that we can ſcarce purchaſe it too dear.

dear. For He, who is lowly in his own Eyes, and ſenſible of his own Failings, makes no difficulty to acknowledge his Offences againſt his Neighbour, and gives all reaſonable Satisfaction, to any who have cauſe to be angry at him. Nor does this Forwardneſs to Reconciliation, expoſe him to the Inſults of injurious Men; for God charges his Providence with a peculiar Protection of the Humble, and delivers ſuch as are of a contrite Spirit. He condeſcends to dwell with the Humble, and hath engaged to comfort their holy Sorrows. To theſe he promiſes large Portions of his Grace, and that, *They who abaſe themſelves ſhall afterwards be exalted:* To Theſe he reveals his Secrets, and draws them to himſelf with the Cords of Love and Kindneſs: The Humble ſuffers no diſturbance of Mind, but receives the Reproaches and Affronts of Men without any great Impreſſion. For he conſiders, that God, and not the World, is his Hope, and if *his* Favour be but ſecured, the reſt cannot be of any very great Importance. In ſhort, This Virtue is ſo neceſſary, ſo fundamental a one, that no Man ought to eſteem himſelf a Proficient in Goodneſs, who is not yet arrived to that Pitch of it, which teaches him to think himſelf the leaſt of all Saints, and laſt of all Men.

Luke xiv. Pſal. xxv.

Chap. III.

The Peace-maker.

SEcure Peace at Home in the firſt place; and, when thy own Breaſt is thus compoſed, it will then be proper to Reconcile and make Peace among thy Neighbours. And This indeed is a very worthy and reputable Action; it brings greater and juſter Commendation

mendation to a Man, and more Benefit to those with whom he converses, than Wit, or Learning, or any of those other so much admired Accomplishments. And, as every thing is set off by its Contrary, so here, the Mischief of a contentious Disposition is unconceivable; For nothing can be so innocent, nothing so well or kindly meant, but such a Man will be sure to fix some ill Interpretation upon it: But the good Temper will be as careful on the other Hand to take every thing in the best Sense it is capable of. For a peaceable Man is not apt to suspect Ill of any; But the Peevish and Discontented are rackt and tormented with a thousand jealous Whimsies, and neither are quiet themselves, nor content to let other People be so. They are very liberal in saying what they should not; and as backward in doing what they should. Diligent observers of their Neighbour's Duty, and scandalously negligent of their Own: Whereas in truth, our Saviour's Rule should always be our Measure; for no Man is fit to Censure or Correct his Brother, by pulling *the Mote out of his Eye*, till he have first exercised a due Severity upon himself, and be effectually reformed, by *casting the Beam out of his own Eye*. And oh! how happy should we be, how eased of Detraction, and Calumny, and Censoriousness, if none would take upon them to Condemn or Censure others, till they were first qualified for the Authority they usurp, by a thorough Amendment of their own Manners, and being Proof against any just Reprehension themselves.

Who can forbear the observing, how manifestly unequal we are in our Dealings? Every one is ingenious at framing Excuses, and making large Allowances for what he doth himself, and yet scarce any body admits the Apologies alledged by others in their own Vindication. How much more just and reasonable were our Proceedings, would we but pass a favoura-

ble Conſtruction upon the Actions of others, and turn the Severity of our Cenſure upon our Own? If you expect to be born with, you muſt firſt learn to bear with your Brethren, and exerciſe the good Nature you expect, as oft as Occaſion offers. For Men are beſt taught by Examples, and the Meaſure we mete gives us a Right to receive the ſame again. But is this Charity? Is this Humility? nothing more diſtant from it. For theſe diſpoſe us to condemn and be angry with no body but our ſelves. To keep up a good Underſtanding with Men of Goodneſs and Temper, is but a very vulgar Virtue; this is eaſie and delightful, for every Man naturally deſires Quiet and good Uſage, and cannot help being well affected to Perſons who love, and pleaſe, and are like him. The Difficulty is, to carry Matters ſmooth and inoffenſively with Men of rugged, intractable, and fierce Diſpoſitions; with thoſe, who make little Conſcience of what they do or ſay, and ſtick at nothing unjuſt or unfair in their Dealings. And He who can do this is a truly great Soul, and ſets a noble and commendable Pattern of Philoſophical, or, which is more, of Chriſtian Fortitude.

There are a ſort of Men, who cheriſh Peace and Quiet, with themſelves and all the World; and Another very vile ſort of Wretches, the very Reverſe of theſe, who delight to fiſh in troubled Waters, and are neither eaſie, nor will ſuffer any body elſe to be ſo; eternally troubleſom to others, but much more tormenting and vexatious to themſelves. And there are yet a Third ſort, who are not ſatisfy'd with giving no Offence, but make it their Buſineſs to reconcile others, where it hath been given; and to reſtore that Peace which they were never inſtrumental in diſturbing. But when all is done, our Life here is expoſed to perpetual Miſery and Contention; and the utmoſt Degree of Peace we muſt expect to arrive at does not conſiſt in being free from Injuries and Croſſes,

but

but in bearing them with Humility, and not being provoked to Impatience, and uneaſie Reſentments. And therefore, the more any Man hath brought himſelf to Suffer, and the better he entertains Afflictions and Wrongs, the more ſerene his Mind will be. For this Perſon hath gained a Conqueſt over himſelf, is above the Reach of Fortune, hath the World at his Command, is a Friend of Chriſt, and an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Chap. IV.

Purity and Sincerity.

There are two Wings, by which a Man ſoars above the World, Sincerity and Purity. The former regards the Intention, the latter, the Affections: That aſpires and aims at a Likeneſs to God; This makes us really like him. We ſhould find no Difficulty in any good Action, were but our Minds free from all intemperate Paſſion and Deſire. And this Perfection of Freedom we ſhould not fail to attain, did we, in all our Deſigns and Undertakings, propoſe no other Ends, than Obedience to the Will of God, and promoting the Good of our Neighbour. Were but our Minds thus fixed, and our Intentions regulated, every thing would ſtrangely contribute to our Edification. We ſhould ſtudy the Volume of Nature with Profit, and every Line in that large Book would tend to our Inſtruction. The very ſmalleſt, and, in common Eſteem, moſt deſpicable Creature would repreſent, as in a Glaſs, the Goodneſs of God to us. And the reaſon why theſe things are ſeen with ſo uſeleſs Speculation, is becauſe our Minds are not rightly diſpoſed, to draw thoſe profitable and practical Inferences,

which very naturally reſult from them. For, as Colours appear to our Minds as they are painted in the Eye, ſo the Judgment Men make of all outward Objects, depends upon the Condition of the Mind. And we argue and pronounce of them differently, as we happen to be differently affected before-hand.

If there be ſuch a thing as true Pleaſure in this World, the Pure in Heart injoy it. And if there be a Hell upon Earth, it dwells in that Man's Breaſt, who hath a guilty and polluted Conſcience. As Iron is ſcoured from the Ruſt by Fire, and becomes bright and new; ſo that Zeal, by which we renounce the World, and turn entirely to God, takes off our Filth, and changes us into new Men. The lukewarm and indifferent Chriſtian grudges every thing he does, boggles at every Difficulty, and ſeeks his Satisfaction in worldly and outward Comforts. But, if he warmly apply himſelf to ſubdue his Paſſions, and reſolutely Attempt the following God in his own Way, the Hardſhips which at firſt diſcouraged him, grow familiar, and leſſen upon his Hands. All, that God appoints him to do or ſuffer, becomes ſenſibly to him an *eaſie Yoke and a light Burden*, and *he finds Peace and Reſt to his Soul.*

Matth. xi. 29, 30.

Chap. V.

Know thy ſelf.

IT is a very uſual thing with us, to have a mighty Confidence in our ſelves; when alas! the want both of Abilities and Performance reproves our Vanity and Folly. For how ſmall is the Proportion of our Gifts, in compariſon of our own Imaginations concerning them? And how defective our Wiſdom and Care to

to uſe and improve, even that Proportion we have? The Light that is in us ſhines but dimly, and by our Neglect we ſuffer it to go quite out. We are often blind, and not ſenſible of our Infirmities; we ſtumble and fall, and ſtill pretend we ſee; commit horrible Sins, aggravate our Guilt by defending what we have done; nay, are ſometimes ſo wretchedly deluded, as even to ſanctifie our Wickedneſs by a Pretence of Zeal. The ſmalleſt Faults of Others ſeldom eſcape our Cenſure, and the much greater of our Own as ſeldom fall under our Obſervation. The Burdens and Hardſhips we put upon Them ſeem reaſonable, eaſie, and light; but the leaſt and moſt trivial Uneaſineſs they create to Us, we have a quick and painful Senſe of, and cry out, *Who can bear it?* Whereas, would we but take a right Eſtimate of our ſelves, and judge our own Actions impartially, we ſhould find little Leiſure, and leſs Provocation, to pronounce ſeverely concerning our Brethren.

Now this is the wiſe and truly ſpiritual Man's Method: He employs his Thoughts at Home, conſiders, that there lies his proper Buſineſs and Care, and is tender of other Peoples Failings, from a due and humble Conſciouſneſs of his own. And, whatever fond Opinions we may cheriſh of our own Virtue, Religious and Perfect we are not, nor ever can be, till we examine our own Conſciences diligently, and leave all the reſt of the World to ſtand and fall by the Judgment of their own Maſter. Cenſoriouſneſs and Chriſtian Piety can never dwell together. For this would work us to a Neglect of all things without us, and make us both forbear and deſpiſe all Judging, but thoſe of God and our own Conſciences. The Mind, which does not converſe with it ſelf, is an idle Wanderer, and all the Learning in the World is fruitleſs and miſemployed, while in the midſt of this boaſted Knowledge, a Man continues in profound Ignorance, of that

which in point both of Duty and Advantage he is moſt concerned to know. True Peace and Satisfaction of Mind can only be acquired by doing our own Buſineſs; And Friendſhip and Charity are beſt preſerved by leaving off all impertinent and buſie Curioſity concerning the Conduct and Reputation of our Neighbours.

The abandoning all worldly Care is a true Argument of greater Proficience in Goodneſs. For, by eſteeming highly of any thing here below, our Value for God and Heaven is unavoidably leſſened and impaired. Let nothing therefore but God, and the things that be of God, ſeem great or grateful to thee, worthy deſiring, or rejoycing in: And all that imaginary Comfort, which the Creatures pretend to adminiſter, treat with the generous Neglect and Contempt, that it deſerves. For a Soul entirely devoted to the Love of God, will naturally deſpiſe every thing in compariſon of Him. And reaſon good there is why it ſhould do ſo, when we conſider, that every thing elſe is frail and of ſhort continuance, empty and unſatisfactory; but God alone Eternal, Omnipreſent, Infinite in every Excellence; and therefore He is the beſt, He the only Comfort and true Joy of the Soul, who alone can fill and exceed its largeſt Deſires.

Chap. VI.

The Joy of a good Conſcience.

THe Glory and Privilege of a good Man conſiſts in the Teſtimony of his own Mind; For this is a perpetual Feaſt and Triumph. It ſets him above the Power of Fortune, and makes the ſharpeſt Afflictions, not only an Exerciſe of his invincible Patience, but a Mat-

Matter of undiſturbed Joy to him. Whereas even Proſperity it ſelf cannot procure Eaſe and Content to a guilty and ſelf-condemning Breaſt. Wouldſt thou then enjoy a ſweet and uninterrupted Tranquility? keep all at Peace within, and give thy own Thoughts no cauſe to reproach thee. All the Satisfaction we take or promiſe our ſelves, is vain and dangerous, except that only, which proceeds from a Senſe of having done our Duty. The Men thou ſeeſt ſo Gay, ſo ſeemingly full of Delight, are galled and ſtung within; they have no inward, no true Contentment, and, notwithſtanding their moſt induſtrious Purſuits of Pleaſure, that Sentence of God is irreverſible, and the ſad Effects of it hang over their Hearts, that *there is no Peace to the Wicked*. They Iſa. lvii. 21. may perhaps make mighty Boaſts of their Enjoyments, put on an Air of Happineſs, give out, that their Pomp and Greatneſs ſecures them from the Aſſaults of Miſery; but theſe are all Deluſions, and ought not to incline our Aſſent, or provoke our Envy. We ſee not their inward Tortures; nor are Witneſſes of thoſe Checks and Terrours, which make Retirement bitter and inſupportable, and haunt their Cloſets and their Beds: We ſee not yet, but there is a time coming when we ſhall ſee, an angry God breaking out upon them in Fury; their mighty Projects quaſhed and baffled, and all the Happineſs they vainly boaſted of, vaniſh like a Dream.

While therefore theſe Men take a Pride in their Succeſſes and outward Enjoyments, do Thou with equal Satisfaction entertain thy Afflictions. This is not indeed to Fleſh and Blood an eaſie Undertaking, but to a Soul filled with Grace and Love, which knows and propoſes to it ſelf no other Happineſs but God, nothing is impracticable, nothing difficult. For what is this, but to rejoyce in the fatherly Care and Affection, of Him whoſe Providence ordereth theſe Suf-

ferings for thy Good? The Glory, which we give, or receive from one another, is very fickle, and periſhing. It cannot laſt long, and while it does, ſome Alloy of Sorrow will ever attend and damp it. The Good Man's Glory ſtands upon ſtronger Foundations; It riſes from within, and muſt endure ſo long as that Innocence which creates it: Nay, it muſt laſt as long as God himſelf; For His Will carefully performed, His Favour and Approbation which follows that Performance, are the ſolid Baſes on which it ſtands. And theſe can never fail, ſo long as Truth and Juſtice continue impregnable. To Him who aſpires after eternal Glory and Honour, that of this World is of very little Conſideration. And theſe are ſo very different, ſo inconſiſtent, that the Love and ſincere Deſires of the One are beſt proved by a Neglect and Diſeſteem of the Other. Nay, not only the future, but the preſent Happineſs is beſt ſecured by ſeeking the Approbation of God alone; For nothing contributes more to an eaſie and quiet Mind, than the diſregard of the Praiſe, and deſpiſing the Cenſures and Reproaches of Men.

A pure and quiet Conſcience does above all things diſpoſe a Man to reſt contented with his Condition: And particularly, with regard to the Opinion of the World, it is highly reaſonable he ſhould do ſo. For what is any one really the better or the worſe, for what other People ſay of him? Their Commendations add nothing to his Virtue, nor does their Diſpraiſe and Scandal take one whit from it. The Man is ſtill the ſame; What his own Actions and the Judgment of God make him; this is the Standard of our Worth and Happineſs; neither more nor leſs belongs to us, than will be found to do ſo at the laſt great Account; And That will depend, not upon what we were ſaid or ſuppoſed to be, but upon what in very deed we were in this World. The more Reſpect therefore we bear to

the

the Condition of our own Minds, the leſs Impreſſion will the Characters and Reports of Men make upon us. For God ſeeth not as Men ſee: They obſerve the Face and outward Appearance, but He ſearcheth and underſtands the Heart; They look upon the Action, and form a Judgment from thence, He ſees our Intentions, and condemns or acquits us, according to our Honeſty and Sincerity, our corrupt Inclinations and wicked Deſigns. And therefore a modeſt, humble Man makes it his conſtant Care, to be doing Good, and to think meanly of his own Performances. He ſeeks, nay he feels, no great matter of Comfort, from any of the Advantages which attend Well-doing in this World; but conſiders whom he ſerves, and for whoſe ſake he does it, and cheerfully relies upon *him* alone, for the Praiſe and Reward of that which beſt deſerves it. And when we are not anxiouſly concerned for the Teſtimony and Credit of Men, then may we truly be ſaid to have reſigned our ſelves to God, and to depend upon Him with that ſtedfaſt and holy Confidence, which becomes us: *Not he that commendeth himſelf*, (no nor He whom others commend neither) *is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.* 2 Cor. x. 18. And therefore a Holy and Spiritual Man indeed lays aſide, as much as may be, all Concern with the World. He conſiders that God is the only Perſon whom he ſhould labour to Pleaſe; and while he is Happy in *his* Approbation, and the Witneſs of a good Conſcience, all outward Accidents are conſidered as things remote and forreign to his main Deſign, and ſuch as ought not much to affect him.

CHAP.

Chap. VII.

Of Loving Jeſus above all things.

BLeſſed is that Man indeed, who feels and reliſhes the Love of Jeſus; who finds the Sweet of this Love, and can even deſpiſe and hate himſelf for his Saviour's ſake. For, though the Love of our ſelves be the very Voice of Reaſon and Nature, yet the ſame Voice commands us too, to quit a leſs valuable Friend for a better. And this Exchange He hath made neceſſary to our Obedience, who requires us, To love him only, above all things: And He alone is worthy of our Love. For the Objects of this World, which are too apt to engage our Affections, are uncertain and deceitful, but Chriſt is Faithful and Eternal, and will not fail to return and reward our Love. He that depends upon any temporal Comfort, will one Day be convinced of its Frailty to his coſt, when He and It both periſh together; but Jeſus remaineth for ever. And as he cannot periſh himſelf, ſo neither will he ſuffer any to periſh, who depend upon *him*. Let *him* then be your Hope, your Joy, your Love; whoſe Friendſhip and whoſe Power are everlaſting. Though all things forſake you yet will not He; nay, all things elſe will certainly forſake you, but even then He will be All, and more than all the World, to you.

Living and dying then keep cloſe and ſtedfaſt to him, for he in Life and Death will be to you Advantage. But then his Friendſhip and conſtant Protection depends upon this Condition, That you admit no Rival into Competition with him; He will not accept divided Affections, but expects to reign ſupreme and ſole Lord of your Heart; and the only way of inviting him thither, is to caſt out all other Inmates, and let Him have the whole Houſe to himſelf. And indeed, when

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we come to consider and compute Matters justly, whatever Love or Regard we have allowed to any thing but Him, will be found in a manner perfectly lost and thrown away. Do not therefore indulge a Passion, which can turn to no account. Lean not upon a broken Reed, which will not only let thee fall, but pierce thy Arm too. And such a Reed is mortal Man, *For all Flesh is Graß, and all the Glory thereof flourisheth, as a Flower of the Field, The Graß withereth and the Flower fadeth*; And they who are enamoured with its Beauty, find how poor and transitory, how empty and deceitful a Good they set their Hearts upon. Where-ever else we expect Comfort, our Hopes are soon blasted, or wretchedly disappointed: But when our Thoughts and Wishes center in Jesus, we are sure to find what we look for, sure to obtain all that we did, more than we could, expect. Think not to find Satisfaction in thy self; For the better you understand your self, the less cause you will find to love your self; And the more you indulge this Love, the greater and more certain will be your Ruin. Seek then thy Lord and only Saviour; For He who hath Christ possesses all things, and He who neglects him does himself more Mischief than all the Enemies, nay, all this World, and all the Powers of Hell, could ever bring upon him.

1 Pet. i. 24.

Chap.

Chap. VIII.

Of intimate Converſation and Friendſhip with Jeſus.

WHile Jeſus is preſent by his Grace and Comforts, nothing is hard to do, nothing grievous to ſuffer: But Happineſs and perfect Peace dwell and reign in my Breaſt. But the moment he withdraws his cheering Preſence, all my Supports are loſt and gone, all my Faculties diſabled, and every Difficulty inſuperable, every Croſs inſupportable. The Conſolations of this World make no Impreſſion, nor give any ſolid Joy, while he continues ſilent; but let *him* ſpeak one ſingle Word of Comfort to the Soul, and ſhe is gay in the midſt of Diſtreſſes. Thus *Mary* roſe immediately, and dried up her Tears, upon the News of his Approach, and the firſt Call of her dear Maſter. And happy ſure was ſhe, happy is every Mortal in this Vale of Tears, whom Jeſus calls. For whom he calls and commands to come to him, he calls from Grief and Mourning to true Joy. How flat and inſipid, how harſh and unpleaſant is all we are, and all we have, without this heavenly Comforter? How empty and deluding all thoſe Wiſhes and Deſires, which are placed upon any other Object? They bid us infinitely to our loſs. A Loſs greater and more irretrievable, than if we loſt the whole World: For could we gain the whole World with the loſs of Him, it were a fooliſh and moſt miſerable Exchange. And what indeed is all the World without Him? To be deprived of this one Friend, is bitterer than Death; To enjoy and poſſeſs Him, the only Happineſs of Life. His Friendſhip is Security ſufficient againſt a whole World of Enemies. A Treaſure above all the Riches of the Univerſe; He who finds this, hath more than both

John xi.

both the *Indies*, and he who loſes it, loſes more than can be expreſs'd. But why do I ſay more? He loſes all; For this is Poverty indeed, this the only Poverty, to loſe the only true Riches.

So all-ſufficient, ſo delightful, ſo heavenly ſweet, is the Friendſhip and Company of Jeſus. But every Man is not qualified for ſo precious a Bleſſing; for it requires great Care, and Skill, and Wiſdom, to be fit for this Enjoyment. Humility and Charity muſt make, and keep him, ours. Piety and Peace are the Diſpoſitions, he delights in. Sin, and Paſſion, and worldly Affections, will drive him away. And if he take his flight, where, wretched Man, where wilt thou find a Friend? Without a Friend thou canſt not live in comfort; and if He be not thy only Friend, thou art left deſolate and forlorn. Conſider then, how miſerable thou makeſt thy ſelf by placing thy Confidence, or thy Joy, in any other. For better were it far, that the whole World ſhould bend their utmoſt Spight againſt thee, than This one Friend be provoked to Diſpleaſure. If therefore Relations and Acquaintance be dear, yet let none be ſo, comparably to thy God and Saviour. Remember, They are dear for *his* ſake, but He for his own. For this is the peculiar Prerogative of Chriſt, that Enemies as well as Friends ſhould challenge a ſhare in thy Affections upon his Account; Thou art to Forgive and Love, to Pity and Pray for, all Mankind, becauſe *he* loves them all; and it ought to be the earneſt Deſire of our Hearts, that all may know, and be ſenſible of his Love, and make ſome ſuitable Returns for ſuch wonderful Goodneſs; but neither we nor any other Perſon, have a Right to be loved for our own ſelves; for the Foundation of Love is Excellence and Goodneſs, and this is all from God. In Him alone it dwells originally, inherently, independently; and what proportion ſoever any Creature hath, is entirely derived from him, the Emanation of that univerſal and in-

inexhauſtible Source. And therefore He alone hath right to command our Love for his own Excellence, becauſe all Excellence is His: He alone is to be loved above all others, becauſe he neither hath, nor can have any Equal. Covet not then the Praiſe or Love of Men, for Praiſe and Love are God's peculiar. Nor laviſhly diſpenſe theſe to Others, but in thy ſelf and all Perſons of Virtue and Merit, laud and admire and love the Graces of Chriſt.

Bring to thy Lord a clean and upright Spirit, free from the ſordid Affections of the World: That thou may'ſt be entirely His, and ſolace thy ſelf with the Delights of his Converſation. But leave the World, and come to him thou canſt not, without the Prevention and Aſſiſtance of his Grace. This only can exalt thy Deſires, and draw and charm thy Heart with the Cords of Divine Love. For Man can *do all things through Chriſt that ſtrengthens* him; but if that Succour be withdrawn, he is blind and naked, deſtitute and weak, full of Confuſion and Torment; or rather, he is Confuſion in the Abſtract, Weakneſs and Impotence it ſelf. And if ſometimes thou feel an inward Scourge, let not thy melancholy Thoughts deject or drive thee to Deſpair. For ſpiritual Comforts and Joys are ſown in Tears; and Patience brings forth plentiful and perfect Fruits of Righteouſneſs and Peace. If theſe Sorrows proceed from a Reflection upon thy own Sins and Infirmities, indulge the holy Grief; and Lament, as becomes a ſerious Penitent, thy own Unworthineſs, and former Miſery; If Adverſities ſent from the Hand of God afflict thee, ſupport thy ſelf with the Conſolations of a good Conſcience, and be aſſured, that ſuffering ſo as may advance thy Maſter's Honour, will end in Glory and Advantage to thy ſelf. But conſider, that in either caſe, the Trouble cannot be long; for theſe black Intervals of Sadneſs will as certainly, as naturally be followed with in-

Phil. iv.

inward Peace and Joy, as Summer ſucceeds Winter, and Storms are hushed into a profound Calm.

Chap. IX.

The Diſconſolate State.

When all Humane Comforts forſake us, if God vouchſafe to ſupply their place with ſpiritual and heavenly, which are infinitely better; we are not much to wonder, if the Soul preſerve its Temper, and bear up manfully under ſuch Circumſtances. But when the World and God both frown; then to bear ſuch Deſertion with Patience, and be content to be abandoned of all our Hopes for his Glory; then to acknowledge our Unworthineſs, and not charge God fooliſhly, nor be partial to our ſuffering ſelves; This is Virtue and Reſignation indeed, the very Excellence and Perfection of an humble and ſubmiſſive Mind. Who that conſiders, can forbear rejoycing, while the cheerful Light of God's Countenance ſhines bright about him? What Wretch is ſo unreaſonable, to grudge his Service, when Bounty and Bleſſings reward his Pains, and convince him, that he does not ſerve God for nought? This is the happy Seaſon, which every Man deſires and triumphs in. Smooth and pleaſant is His Paſſage, whom the Grace of God conducts, and carries through this troubleſome World. For how can we think it ſtrange, that he ſhould not feel the weight of his Burden, who is ſtrengthned and ſupported by Almighty Power, and led through Difficulties and Dangers by the Captain of his Salvation?

It is natural for us, to cling faſt about any thing that may give us eaſe; and hard for a Man to deveſt himſelf of carnal Affections; So that, before our Paſſions

ſions be effectually ſubdued, and our Delight and Hope fixt entirely upon God, many and frequent Conflicts muſt be undergone. And yet, at no Expence leſs than this, is our Peace and Quiet to be purchaſed. For ſo long as a Man reſts upon his own Strength, he is eaſily diverted to worldly Comforts, and taſts little Satisfaction, but what ariſes from ſuch. But He, whoſe Soul is enamoured with God and Goodneſs, expects not his Delight from ſenſual Enjoyments; but finds a Pleaſure in the ſeverer Exerciſes of Virtue and Devotion, and even enjoys the Difficulties he undergoes for Chriſt's ſake.

If then God ſhed down ſpiritual Comforts from Above, entertain the precious Gift with Humility and Thanks; and loſe not the Effect and Reward of Grace, by ſuppoſing it your Due, or valuing your ſelf upon it. Rejoyce in the Bleſſing: but temper that Joy with Gratitude; and let it not ſwell to Inſolence and Vanity, to Cenſoriouſneſs or Contempt of thy weaker Brethren; but the more thou haſt received, the greater let thy Modeſty be; and the more thy Fear, thy Diligence and Watchfulneſs that thou abuſe not ſuch gracious Liberality. For Comfort and Gladneſs will not laſt always; a Cloud will come betwixt, and interupt the cheerful Beams of this Sun of Righteouſneſs. Temptations will have their turn too; and therefore, when theſe fall hard and heavy, let Patience and Humility, not hopeleſs Deſpondency be the Effect of ſuch Oppreſſions. The Greatneſs of thy Sufferings muſt inflame thy Truſt, thy Zeal, thy Devotion; and fervent Prayer is the proper Weapon againſt the Attacks of our ſpiritual Adverſary. For Matters are not deſperate; and he who took away his Supports, only withdraws them for a ſeaſon, and to thoſe who ſeek them with holy Perſeverance, will at a fit, (that is, at his own) time, reſtore them again with Advantage. This is a uſual thing with God. The Prophets and Saints

Saints of old have all advanced to their Crowns by the ſame rough Way of Grief and Deſertion. Nor may we ſuppoſe, that theſe diſconſolate Intervals are the Effects of God's Anger and final Abdication of us.

Obſerve how eminent an Inſtance of theſe Changes we have in *the Man after God's own Heart*; When the Grace and Favour of God was lifted up upon him, his Mind was exalted proportionably: *In my Proſperity, I ſaid, I ſhall never be caſt down, thou, Lord, of thy Goodneſs, hadſt made my Hill ſo ſtrong.* Pſal. xxx. 6. When this Favour was withdrawn, he confeſſes the Conſequence of it, the deep and heavy Impreſſion it made upon his Spirits, *Thou didſt turn thy Face from me, and I was troubled.* 7. But yet this Trouble, ſharp and ſenſible as it was, did not ſink down into Deſpair. His Remedy was Prayer, *Then cryed I unto thee, O Lord, and got me to my Lord right humbly.* 8. And how ſucceſsful this Application proved, himſelf declares, *The Lord heard me, and had Mercy upon me; Thou haſt turned my Mourning into Dancing, thou haſt put off my Sack-cloth, and girded me with Gladneſs.* 10, 11. Now, if theſe Sorrows were the Portion of thoſe bright Patterns of Piety; if God's dearly beloved Children and faithfulleſt Servants have not lived conſtantly under his propitious Smiles; if Men of ſo exalted Virtue were yet differently affected, as they felt different Diſpenſations of Providence toward them; what are We poor, We weak, deſertleſs Wretches, that we ſhould expect to be exempted from Troubles? What is Our Zeal in compariſon of Theirs, that we ſhould hope to have it always warm, always gay? What have We done to confine the kindly Influences of that Spirit, and ſecure them conſtant to our ſelves, which even to thoſe that uſe and improve it beſt, *goes and comes, and blows only where and when is liſteth?* John iii. 8. And therefore *Job*

takes notice of it, as a Fate common to all Mankind, that God does not ſo magnifie, or ſet his Heart upon any one among them, but that *he viſits him every Morning, and tries him every Moment.*

Job vii. 17, 18.

Where therefore can we ſafely place our Confidence, except in the Grace and Mercy of God only? All other Comforters are miſerable. The Company and Exhortation of Religious Men, The tender and affectionate Advice of dear and faithful Friends, The Entertainment of good Books, The moving Strains of pious Eloquence, The heavenly Raptures of Pſalms and Hymns, All theſe adminiſter but very poor, and ſlender Relief, to aſſwage the Anguiſh of our Minds, or but ſo much as to divert and deceive our Pain, if God withdraw his Conſolations, and leave us to the deſolate Condition of merely Humane Helps. Then as our laſt and beſt Refuge, we muſt fly to God; humble our ſelves under his mighty Hand; ſubmit to what he lays upon us; acknowledge his Goodneſs even in our Sufferings; and be content to ſuffer ſtill, ſo long as he ſees fit; For he will not ſee fit to continue his Diſpleaſure for ever, but will revive the Contrite, and exalt the Humble in due time.

I never yet, to the beſt of my Remembrance, met with any remarkably good Man, who had not, at ſome time or other, fallen into theſe Diſcomforts; and languiſhed under the Apprehenſion of God's Diſpleaſure, or the Abatement of his own Zeal. Nor was it ever deſigned, that any Man in this Life ſhould arrive at ſo exalted a State of Holineſs, and abſolute Safety, as not to be ſometimes tempted. Though this happens at very different times, and Some have their Tryals in the beginning of their Converſion, which are reſerved for Others to their later and more perfect Days. It ſeems, the ſublime and rapturous Contemplations of God are a Bleſſing too precious for thoſe who have not firſt indured ſome Trouble of Mind, to qualifie them

them for ſo excellent a Reward. Well then may we Rejoyce in theſe Temptations, which are ordained certain Forerunners of more abundant Grace, and Signs of theſe unſpeakable Conſolations and Delights, which are reſerved for them that have approved themſelves Faithful. For not to him that is excuſed from Fighting, but *to Him that overcometh* by ſtriving couragiouſly, and endureth to the end, *will I give to eat of the Tree of Life.* Rev. ii. 7.

Moſt wiſely therefore are theſe Viciſſitudes of Proſperity and Adverſity appointed for the Improvement of our Piety and Virtue. Were our Troubles without Intermiſſion, no Fleſh could be ſaved; and therefore God ſoftens and rewards them with inward and heavenly Comforts, that ſo, aſſiſted by his Grace and encouraged by his Favour, we may be able to bear up againſt our ſharpeſt Tryals. But were that Grace and Favour conſtant too, we ſhould be immoderately exalted with our Performances, and impute the Bleſſings of God to our own Merit. And therefore the Returns of Affliction, and ſpiritual Deſertion are convenient, to prevent or check our Pride; and ſhew us, that how greatly ſoever we may value our ſelves, yet are we not ſo perfect, but that we deſerve to ſuffer; and the Good we receive, we receive, not of Debt, but of Liberality and free Grace. Miſtake not, Man, the Devil never ſleeps. He always watches for an Opportunity to aſſault and work thee Miſchief. The Fleſh is not utterly dead, nor its Appetites and Paſſions ſo totally extinct, but that every freſh Object will awaken them into Luſt. Be Thou therefore awake too, and prepare every Day for ſome new Conflict: Speak not Peace to thy ſelf, when beſet on every ſide with numerous and reſtleſs Enemies; for wretched is thy Caſe, if their Violence be ſuffered to bear thee down, or their ſubtle and wakeful Malice ſurpriſe thee into Sin.

Chap. X.

Thankfullneſs for God's Mercies.

Man is born to Trouble as the Sparks fly upward, and doſt thou refuſe the Condition of Nature, by hoping to be exempted from Labour and Suffering? Conſider this, and apply thy ſelf vigorouſly to Patience, as a moſt neceſſary Virtue, and learn to bear the Croſs as the Buſineſs thou art created for. For this will much better become a ſinful Creature, than to depend upon Comforts, which thou deſerveſt not, and Pleaſures which belong not to thee. Could even the Worldly-minded be ſecure of ſpiritual Joys without Interruption, he could not, in Agreement with his own Principle, but be paſſionately fond of them, as yielding more ſubſtantial Satisfaction, than all external and ſenſual Delights. For what Compariſon can there be, between thoſe Pleaſures which are attended with Shame, or Deceit, and thoſe which are ſolid and durable, void of Reproach and Indecency, the Fruits of Virtue, and the ſpecial Gift of God to chaſt and heavenly Souls? This then were *Epicuriſm* indeed, were this to be attained and preſerved, by any the moſt aſſiduous Care of ours: But that which renders even theſe Joys leſs ſenſible, and leſs eagerly deſired, is, that they are the free Gift of God; who both diſpenſes and withdraws them, as himſelf ſees fit, and frequently ſuſpends the Happineſs they bring, by ſtrong and ſevere Tryals. For we are in a State of continual Diſcipline and Warfare, and our Conflicts muſt return very thick upon us, ſo long as we remain in ſuch a State.

Job v. 7.

Nor are theſe Difficulties from the Malice of our Enemies only, but we our ſelves contribute to our own Miſery, and obſtruct the more liberal Communi-

cations

cations of Divine Grace and Comfort, by affecting a miſtaken Freedom, and extravagant Conceits of our own Strength and Goodneſs. The Bounty of God is admirable, who ſupports us with the inward Satisfactions of his Spirit; but the Folly of Man is prodigious, who does not diſcern and thankfully acknowledge, that all his Ability to do well is imparted by a higher Hand. If then the Gifts of Heaven are diſtributed to us, more ſparingly than we wiſh or expect, we leſſen their Proportions, by not being duly qualified to receive them. And qualified we cannot be, while ingrateful to the Author, and negligent to improve all we receive to the Giver's Praiſe and Honour. For he who hath and uſeth Grace aright, does by that very Act incline God to give more. And from the proud unthankful Neglecters of the Favour, even what they had is taken away, and added to the Portion of the Humble and Diligent; Thoſe, who are duly ſenſible from whom, and to what Purpoſes, they have it.

Might I be allowed to chooſe my own Lot, I ſhould think it much more eligible, to want my ſpiritual Comforts, than to abound in theſe at the Expence of my Humility. No; let a penitent and contrite Spirit always be my Portion, and may I ever ſo be the Favourite of Heaven, as never to forget, that I am Chief of Sinners. Knowledge in the ſublime and glorious Myſteries of the Chriſtian Faith, and raviſhing Contemplations of God and a future State, are moſt deſirable Advantages; but ſtill I prefer *Charity which edifieth*, before the higheſt intellectual Perfections of that *Knowledge which puffeth up*. For every thing which is high, is not therefore holy; Many Meats are agreeable to the Palat, which are not conducive to Health; and thoſe Gifts which are firſt in Our Eſteem, do not always recommend us moſt to God. Thoſe ſpiritual Advantages are certainly beſt for us, which increaſe our Modeſty, 1 Cor. viii. 1.

and awaken our Caution, and diſpoſe us to ſuſpect, and to deny, our ſelves. And therefore it is an Argument of Wiſdom in God, to recal his Gifts ſometimes; as well as of his Goodneſs, to impart them at others; that by the loſs of what we had, we may experimentally find our own Impotence; confeſs and feel our Wants; and know to whom the whole Glory of all that is excellent in us, does of Right belong. Deal juſtly then in this matter; *Render to God the things that are God's*, and take to thy ſelf what is properly thy own: To Him, the Thanks for his Graces, nay, for the very Power of uſing them aright; To thy ſelf, the Shame and Condemnation of having uſed them no better; And know, that His is the Honour for all thou haſt done well, Thine, only the Blame and juſt Puniſhment for all thou haſt done amiſs.

Sit down in the loweſt Place, and then ſhalt thou with Honour be promoted to the higheſt; for the loftier the Building, the deeper muſt the Foundation be laid. The higheſt in God's Eſteem are meaneſt in their own; And their Excellence conſiſts in the Meekneſs, and Truth, not in the Pomp and Oſtentation, of Piety, which affects to be ſeen and admired of Men. The repoſing our Hope and Truſt in God alone is the moſt effectual Prevention of Vanity and Inſolence; and aſcribing to Him all our Virtues and Attainments is inconſiſtent with coveting the Praiſe of Men. For ſuch Perſons are concerned to approve their Actions to God only; and labour to advance his Glory, as the chief and only thing, which ought to be magnified in all that is pious and commendable, in themſelves and every good Man. *Luke* xiv.

Receive then a little with due Senſe of Gratitude, thus thou ſhalt obtain more. The Gifts, which others eſteem meaneſt and moſt contemptible, conſider as the Gifts of God, and let this raiſe their Value in thy Eſteem. For indeed every thing ought to be eſteemed, which

which is a Mark of his Favour, who is the ſupreme Lord of all: Even Stripes and Puniſhments from *his* Hands ſhould be, not only ſubmitted to with Patience, but received with humble Thanks; ſince his Rod is intended for our Good, and no Diſpenſation of his Providence is without its profitable and wiſe Deſign. If then thou value the Grace of God, and deſire to keep it, be thankful when he gives; be reſigned and patient when he takes away; pray fervently and frequently for the Returns of his Favour, and let not thy own Pride or Careleſneſs provoke him to withdraw it.

Chap. XI.

Of Loving Chriſt in Affliction.

Many we find poſſeſt with ſtrong Deſires of Chriſt's Heavenly Kingdom, and eager of reigning with him there, but Few, who are in love with his Croſs, and content to ſuffer with him upon Earth. The Graces and ſweet Conſolations of his Spirit charm and draw us, but Afflictions drive us away from him. When he invites Men to ſit down at his Table, the Gueſts come crouding in apace; but if he call us after him into the Wilderneſs, to Faſt and Pray with him, he calls in vain, and goes alone. The Breaking of Bread is what all of us like, but the Drinking of his bitter Cup we are ſhamefully averſe to. We read the Hiſtory of his Life, and peruſe his Miracles with Reverence and Delight, for theſe were full of Mercy and Relief to wretched Men; but when he come to the tragical Circumſtances of his dolorous Paſſion and bitter Death, we either ſhut our Books, or read the melancholy Story with Coldneſs and Indifference; Very

1 Pet. xi. 21. hardly perſwading our ſelves, that in *this part he hath left us an Example, that we ſhould follow his Steps.* Such was the Behaviour, not of the Multitudes only, but his own Diſciples too, heretofore, who thronged in to his Hoſanna's, and his Preaching; but when he was apprehended, and treated as a Malefactor, all *forſook him and fled.* And ſuch is the Behaviour of all thoſe Chriſtians ſtill, who ſerve him cheerfully, while things go well with them, and magnifie his Mercy ſo long as they taſt his Goodneſs; but draw back, when Afflictions approach, and if he hide the Brightneſs of his Face, fall into wretched Dejections and Deſpondency of Mind, and are provoked to Impatience and Murmuring, and ſad Complaints.

Matth. xxi. John xviii.

Methinks we might find Charms and Engagements many and powerful, which ſhould unite our Souls and Affections to the Bleſſed Jeſus. From what he is in Himſelf, from what he is to Us, without any reſpect of our own private Intereſt, and the preſent Advantages we receive from him. This would confirm and root us faſt in Love, and Praiſe, and Gratitude; beyond the Power of outward Calamities, or inward Anxieties of Mind, to ſhake and divert us. Then ſhould we with thoſe Holy Men, even think it good, and thank God, that we have been in Trouble, and though he *ſhould ſlay us*, yet ſhould we ſtill delight and *truſt in Him.*

O! Could we once but get above this mercenary Diſpoſition of propoſing Intereſt and Gain in all we do, and love our Bleſſed Lord for his own ſake, how noble would be the Fruits of ſo generous a Principle? And indeed, how can we pretend to love him, when we only love our ſelves; and pay Obedience to his Commands, not out of Regard to *his* Authority and *our* Obligations, nor from a Deſire to pleaſe him, but purely to promote our own Advantage? For where, among the

the many Millions who profeſs to be Zealous Chriſtians, Where is the Man, that would be content to ſerve God, as his Maker and rightful Lord, had he no Expectation of Reward from him? Nay, Who almoſt is ſo ſpiritual, ſo refined, as that Poverty of Spirit, recommended and bleſſed by our Saviour, requires we ſhould be, that is, Reſigned as to all temporal Enjoyments, and well ſatisfied to perſevere in our Duty, and not to think our Maſter hard, though he ſhould even ſtrip us bare of all thoſe Comforts, which are uſually the Encouragements of Piety and Virtue? This is a Temper rarely to be met with; Such a Generoſity and Greatneſs of Spirit, as Crowns and Kingdoms, nay, the whole Eaſtern World were wiſely given in Exchange for. For This is the Perfection of Love; a Virtue ſo exalted, that no other Part of Religion is to be named with it. A Man may beſtow all his Wealth upon the Poor, and be never the better. He may chaſtiſe and mortifie his Fleſh and ſenſual Appetite, with all the Severities of the moſt exemplary Penitence, and yet this is but a low and little Excellence in compariſon: He may attain to the higheſt and cleareſt Knowledge, in the Myſteries of Religion, but ſtill he is infinitely ſhort. His Virtues may be bright and exemplary, his Devotion fervent and conſtant, his Meditations raviſhing and divine; All theſe are valuable Gifts, but there is ſtill one Excellence behind, more valuable, more neceſſary than all the reſt: And that is, Being able, after having renounced all the World beſides, to renounce himſelf for the ſake of his Lord; to devote all he is or can do, ſo entirely to his Service, as to be content with every thing; to ſtudy his Will, his Pleaſure, his Glory in all things, and to conſult his own in nothing: And when he hath faithfully and diligently performed all, which, he knew, it became and was expected from him to do, to eſteem all this of no Conſideration, and account that he hath done nothing.

Others

Others no doubt will have quite different Notions of him. They will ſee and admire, publiſh and extol his Virtues, but ſtill their Commendations, though never ſo profuſe, never ſo juſt, will not have any Influence upon his Judgment; nor tempt him to ſwerve one whit from that Opinion, which Truth it ſelf hath directed us to in this caſe, *When ye have done all that is commanded you, ſay, We are unprofitable Servants.* He will not think that Complaint of the Prophet beneath him, *I am poor and deſolate*, when yet in truth among mortal Men none is more wealthy, none more happy, none greater and more powerful, than He, who in a true Chriſtian Humility thinks himſelf moſt helpleſs, moſt infirm, moſt miſerable. In a word, none more honourable in God's Eyes, than He, who is vileſt and moſt deſpicable in his own.

Luke xvii.

Pſal. xxv.

Chap. XII.

The Reaſonableneſs of taking up our Croſs.

When Jeſus thus deſcribes the Condition of our being owned for His, *If any Man will be my Diſciple, let him deny himſelf and take up his Croſs, and follow me*; the Generality of Men are apt to cry out with thoſe in the Goſpel upon another occaſion, *This is a hard Saying, and who can hear it?* But oh! that ſuch would ſeriouſly conſider, how infinitely more terrible and confounding that Sentence will be, which their angry Judge ſhall pronounce in Thunder at the laſt Day; And how thoſe Ears, which are too ſoft and tender to bear This, will then be able to endure, a *Go, ye Curſed, into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his An-*

Matth. xvi.

John vi.

Matth. xxv.

Angels. Ah! how abſurd, how ſenſleſs is it, not to harden our ſelves at preſent, and cheerfully embrace a Command, which, tho' attended with ſome ſhort Uneaſineſs now, ſhould yet be welcome to us, becauſe it will give us Boldneſs in the great Day of Tryal; and, by impoſing ſome ſhort and very tolerable Pains, be our Security againſt Torments inſupportable and eternal? For when our Lord ſhall come to judge the World with terrible Pomp, the Croſs ſhall be diſplayed and lifted high in Heaven: This thing now ſo much abhorred, ſo full of Shame, ſhall then be a Banner of Triumph; and They who have fought under it here, and followed the crucified Captain of their Salvation, in a Life of Humility and Sufferings, ſhall flock to it as their proper Standard, and enter with their glorious Leader into his Joy and Kingdom.

Why ſhould we then boggle at that Croſs, which leads directly to a Crown? Why thus obſtruct our Happineſs, by refuſing that, which heals our ſpiritual Infirmities, guards us againſt our worſt Enemies, fills us with heavenly Comforts, brightens our Virtues, and ſupports us with aſſured Hopes of unconceivable and everlaſting Bliſs? Remember thy great Maſter and Example, bearing his Croſs, dying upon his Croſs, that thou hereafter mighteſt not diſdain to bear it for thy own Advantage, when he for thy ſake hath born it before thee. For *if we dye with him, we ſhall alſo live with him, if we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo reign with him, but if we deny him*, and are aſhamed of his Puniſhment, he will alſo *deny and be aſhamed of us*, and ſhut us out of his Glory. 2 Tim. ii. Mark viii.

Conſider that thy All depends upon Suffering and Dying. This is the Sum of thy Duty, This the Source of thy Happineſs. God hath ordained no other way of bringing us to himſelf, except that one of *dying daily*, and *crucifying the Fleſh with Affections* Gal. v. 24.

and

and Luſts. In This all the Diſpenſations of Providence conſpire; For, what courſe ſoever you take, which way ſoever you turn, how prudently ſoever you contrive, the Croſs is ſure to meet you every-where. And that which, willingly embraced, would prove your Safety and Virtue, is ſure to be your Portion, whether you will or not. Bodily Sickneſs and Pain, Diſappointments and Loſſes in your Fortunes, Anguiſh and Perplexity of Heart, Diſcomfort and Deſertions from God, Injuries and Provocations from Men, and, which is worſe than all, Diſpleaſure and Diſcontent at your ſelf; One or more of theſe will be perpetually exerciſing your Patience; and, ſo long as God ſees fit to continue you in this State of Mortality and Diſcipline, 'tis vain to hope, you ſhall be exempted from them.

For God, in his great Wiſdom and Goodneſs, appoints us to Tribulation; and damps, or withdraws our preſent Comforts, that we may learn to love and value Him and Heaven the more, to acknowledge our Dependence upon his Bounty, be made ſenſible of our own Impotence, and grow wiſer and more humble by Afflictions. By theſe we are taught to underſtand and value the Sufferings of Chriſt, of which we ſhould have but a very cold and imperfect Idea, did not our own Experience teach us what it is to ſuffer. And the greater Conformity to his Image our Tryals work us up to, the clearer and more affecting Senſe we have of his Infinite Condeſcention. Avoid the Croſs then we cannot, becauſe we cannot run away from our ſelves, nor ceaſe to be Men; And therefore, what we cannot avoid, we muſt make it our Endeavour patiently to endure, and render that which would otherwiſe be our Torment, an Inſtrument of Virtue here, and of Glory hereafter.

Now this is ſtill in our own Power. For They, who ſuſtain their Croſs, ſhall likewiſe be ſuſtained by it

it in return, and all their Pains largely rewarded in their proper time and place; But this Life is not that time and place, and therefore we muſt be content to Labour now, and expect our Recompence hereafter. But if we bear with Murmuring and Grudging, what bear we muſt, we do but gall our Shoulders with the Yoke, and render that a heavy unprofitable Load, which might be fruitful and meritorious. If we caſt off our Burden, we are immediately purſued and oppreſſed by another; and inſtead of Affliction full of Hope and Humility, draw upon our ſelves that moſt intolerable of all Burdens, Guilt and Deſpair.

Why ſhould you entertain an Imagination ſo vain, as that of being made an Exception to all Mankind? Produce me, if you can, one ſingle Inſtance in this whole Catalogue of glorified Saints, who paſſed this Vale of Tears without his Portion of Miſery. Even Jeſus Chriſt himſelf, our great Lord, though God as well as Man, yet lived a Life of Trouble; and none was ever ſo truly *a Man of Sorrows, or* ſo intimately *acquainted with Grief.* Himſelf hath told us, That *it behoved him thus to ſuffer, and to riſe again the third Day, and ſo to enter into his Glory.* Iſaiah liii. Luke xxiv.

And if this was the Way neceſſary for Chriſt himſelf to aſcend to the Throne of God by, we muſt not preſume to hope for a ſmooth and eaſie Paſſage thither. His whole Life was little elſe, but one continued Croſs, a Chain of Sufferings drawn out to the length of ſo many Years, And do We, who profeſs to tread in his Steps, expect a Life of Softneſs, and Eaſe, and Pleaſure? No, no, fond Man, expect nothing but Trouble. This thou may'ſt depend upon, for it will never diſappoint thee. It is not only the Condition of thy Happineſs as a Chriſtian, but thy certain Settlement and Portion as a Man. For Mortality is beſet on every ſide with Croſſes, and expoſed to Suffering every moment. And though theſe be both the Puniſhment and the Reme-

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dy for Sin, yet may we not imagine that they, who are moſt careful to preſerve themſelves from Sinning, are in the ſame Porportion excuſed from Suffering. For frequently the beſt Men undergo the ſevereſt Tryals; and the better they are, the tenderer and more painful Senſe they have of them. For the fervent Love and Deſire of a better Country, their proper and eternal Home, renders the preſent Pilgrimage and Baniſhment more tireſome and afflicting.

But yet theſe Calamities are no juſt Reflection upon the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of Almighty God; for, as he appoints the Rod in his Mercy, ſo does he likewiſe furniſh his Servants with mighty Conſolations and Supports, ſuitable to their Circumſtances. And they, who ſubmit to the Croſs as becomes them, reap large and glorious Fruits by ſowing in Tears. The Burden of their Miſeries is lightned, by caſting their Care, and repoſing their Truſt upon One who hath a tender Care for them. And the more the outward Man is weakned and oppreſt, the greater Strength and Grace they feel in the inner Man. Nay, ſuch is their Deſire, ſuch the Satisfaction, of being conformed to the Image of Chriſt; that good Men oftentimes would not ſo much as wiſh to be freed from thoſe Miſeries, in which the leſs diſcerning Part of the World are apt to think the very Extremity of Unhappineſs to conſiſt. For theſe better inſtructed Souls have a farther Proſpect, and can ſoften all their Diſtreſſes by this Conſideration; That the more they endure, the purer and more refined they are from Sin, and the more acceptable and dear they become to God. 'Tis true; this Conſideration is not the Effect of any Strength or Wiſdom meerly Humane, but the Product of Divine Grace; which ſometimes gains ſo abſolute a Conqueſt over natural Inclination, and exalts Fleſh and Senſe to ſo high a Degree of Reſignation and Perfection, that what, as Men, we cannot but decline, and have violent

lent Averſions to, as Chriſtians, we contentedly embrace, and are entirely ſatisfied with.

When therefore we feel in our ſelves, or obſerve in Others, a Zeal ſo powerful, ſo noble, as, not only to bear, but even to love and delight in the Croſs; When we vanquiſh and bring into abſolute Subjection theſe Bodies, and their Appetites, by a long painful Courſe of rigorous and voluntary Severities; When we induſtriouſly avoid Honours and Wealth; bear Injuries and Infamy contentedly; deſpiſe our ſelves, and even delight to be deſpiſed by others; when we entertain the ſharpeſt Misfortunes with Conſtancy and Temper, and are ſo perfectly dead to the World, as no longer ſo much as to deſire thoſe Enjoyments and Advantages, which recommend and ſweeten Life to Mankind; do not ſuppoſe that this is the Work, or falls within the compaſs, of Man: For They who depend upon their natural Powers, or their own moſt exquiſite Philoſophy can never riſe ſo high, nor thus abſtract their Minds from Matter and Senſe. No Principle but that of Holy Truſt and Faith in God is capable of ſuch Divine Operations. This Strength and Reſolution comes from Heaven; No force leſs than Almighty can beat down the Fleſh, the World and the Devil under our Feet; None defeat and ſet us above the Horrours and Aſſaults of his Malice and Temptations, leſs than His, who vanquiſhed this old Serpent upon the Croſs, and by ſo doing ſanctified our Croſs to us too.

Call up then all thy Powers of Reaſon and Religion. Remember whom thou haſt engaged to follow, and, with all the reſolute Fidelity due to thy Vows and Obedience, ſet thy ſelf manfully to take up *his* Croſs, who ſubmitted to die upon a Croſs for thy Salvation. Prepare and diſpoſe thy Heart, that no Affliction may over-bear thee by ſurpriſe; but conſidering what infinite Variety of Troubles hem thee in, and wait thee every-

every-where, let none have the Advantage of finding thee unprovided. Were there a Poſſibility of eſcaping, we might then be allowed to contrive Methods of declining our Miſeries, but ſince they cannot be ſhifted off, the only Remedy we have left againſt them, is Readineſs to ſuffer. Conſider it is thy Lord's Cup, and that he drunk the very bittereſt Dregs of it; conſider it is He who gives it; and that he therefore gives it, that thou may'ſt be Partaker of his Sufferings, in order to be made a more worthy Partaker of his Glories. 'Tis true, he was ſtrengthened in his Agonies by an Angel ſent from above; nor ſhalt thou want Supports proper for thy Condition. But what theſe are, or in what meaſures fit to be imparted, our Lord himſelf knows beſt; and to *his* wiſe Diſpoſal we muſt leave it. But all we have to do our ſelves, is to ſecure an humble and patient Diſpoſition. And this we ſhould find leſs difficulty in, would we but follow the Pattern our Jeſus hath left, of *enduring the Croſs, and deſpiſing the Shame, for the Glory ſet before him*, And what can recommend our Sufferings, what confirm our Patience more, than to conſider, that *theſe light Afflictions which are but for a Moment ſhall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory?* That Glory, in compariſon of which they are not worthy ſo much as to be named; A Glory ſo exceeding, that if all the Tribulations incident to all Mankind were heaped upon one ſingle Perſon, yet even ſo the Recompence is infinitely above what ſuch a Suffering could pretend to deſerve; and Heaven would be cheap and wiſely bought, even at this vaſt Expence.

Luke xxii.

Hebr. xii.

2 Cor. iv.

Eſteem thy ſelf then happy indeed, when thou canſt even enjoy thy Sorrows, and find a ſenſible Satisfaction in ſuffering for Chriſt; For this is in a manner to attain Heaven upon Earth. A Happineſs, which no Man can ever arrive at, ſo long as Adverſities bring Pain,

Pain, and Diſcontent, and ſad Oppreſſions of Spirit; for the Sollicitude, and conſtant Labour to avoid Calamities will be ſure to produce perpetual Diſquiet.

Suffering and Dying are not only neceſſary Incumbrances upon us, but the beſt and moſt authentick Inſtances of our Virtue and Obedience. It is the Buſineſs and Perfection of a Chriſtian to do thus daily; and They, who in good earneſt apply themſelves to it, will quickly find their Affections raiſed, their Strength increaſed, their Comfort and inward Peace wonderfully advanced. St. *Paul* was rapt up into the third Heaven, yet did not he boaſt ſo much of this as of his Afflictions. And wherein the uncommon Privileges of this eſpecial Favourite conſiſted, we learn from the Mouth of Chriſt himſelf, when he ſays, *I will ſhew him how great things he muſt ſuffer for my Name's ſake.* Suppoſe then you could be admitted to His Extaſies and Revelations; yet even Theſe, 'tis plain from his Example, would not exempt you from Trouble and Suffering; For the more you are loved, and the more vehemently you love, and are deſirous to pleaſe your Saviour, the greater Proofs of this kind you muſt expect to give.

2 *Cor.* xii.

Acts ix.

Conſider thoſe Apoſtles, who went away from their Perſecutors *rejoycing that they were accounted worthy to ſuffer for the ſake of Chriſt,* and learn from thence to covet and value the Honour and Dignity of enduring Pain and Poverty, Perſecution and Reproach. For this would ſeem no mean Preferment, but a Favour reſerved for thoſe whom God is kindeſt to, did we but reflect upon the Gain it brings to our ſelves, the Glory to our Maſter, the Joy to Saints and Angels, and the Benefit to our Brethren, who ſhall obſerve, and be encouraged by our Stedfaſtneſs, and Patience, and holy Perſeverance. Nay, even the Wicked and Carnal will be

Acts v.

moved by ſuch Examples, for there is ſo manifeſt a Congruity and Decency, in ſubmitting to any Adverſities which it ſhall pleaſe God to lay upon us, that even They, who have not the Heart to Imitate, yet will not be able to forbear Commending and Admiring, the Pattern we ſet them.

Would we indeed weigh things in a juſt Ballance, 'tis moſt unreaſonable we ſhould decline Suffering for Chriſt, when it is ſo very viſible, that we are well content to undergo much ſorer Hardſhips for the World, than any he thinks fit to call us to. And ſhall Humour, or Paſſion, or temporal Intereſt be ſuffered to prevail upon us, more powerfully than Duty? Eſpecially, when that Duty promotes an infinitely better Intereſt; and the more we are mortified to our ſelves and the World, the nobler Advances we make towards God and Life Eternal? Theſe are refined Privileges, for which no Man is qualified, till he be firſt purified in the Furnace of Adverſity; nor can the Spiritual and Divine Graces dwell in a Soul, till the Droſs of Earth and ſenſual Appetites be firſt wrought off. Aſſure your ſelf, that Suffering for, and in Obedience to, Chriſt, is not only the moſt acceptable Thing to God, but really advantagious for your ſelf, and that which contributes moſt to the Soul's Health, of any thing that can happen in the Preſent State. And, would the Prejudices Fleſh and Blood lye under, permit us to diſcern and conſider Matters impartially, this would be firſt in our Wiſhes, and preferred before all the outward Proſperity, or inward Satisfactions, this World can give. For who would not be ambitious of reſembling our Lord and his moſt eminent Saints? Who is ſo blind, as not to ſee, that the thing in which they ſignalized their Merit, was not the larger Degree of their Revelations, or the Pleaſures they enjoyed, but the Number and Extremity of their Afflictions?

And

And we may be very confident, that, if Chriſt had known any better Way to Heaven than by Croſſes and Patience, he would both have choſen it himſelf, and reſerved it for his faithfulleſt Servants, and deareſt Friends. But ſince his own Example, and his conſtant Directions declare, That *if any Man will come to him, he muſt deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs, and follow him*, it is but Folly and loſt Labour to think of any other Method; For when all is done, this will be the Sum and Concluſion of the whole Matter, that, *Through much Tribulation we muſt enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Luke xiv.

Acts xiv.

The End of the Second Book.

M. Vander Gucht Sculp.

OF THE IMITATION OF Jeſus Chriſt.

The Third Book,

Digeſted into Conferences between CHRIST and the Soul of his Diſciple.

CHAP. I.

The Happineſs of ſuch a Converſation.

Diſciple.] I *Will hear what the Lord God will ſay concerning me.* For bleſſed is the Soul, which hears the Lord ſpeaking, and feels the tranſporting Comforts of his gracious Words. Bleſſed are the Ears, which, with a greedy Attention, drink in the ſoft and gentle Whiſpers of his Spirit; while they continue obſtinately deaf to the treacherous Inſinuations of this deluding World. And doubly bleſſed are They, who hear the Sound of Truth, not only in the outward Adminiſtrations of the Word, but by the inward and familiar Communications and Motions Pſal. lxxxv. 8.

of infused Grace. Blessed those Eyes, which are shut to all the Objects of the World, and constantly wakeful and open to the Affairs of the Soul, and turned inward upon our selves. Blessed are They, whose sharper Sight enters deep, and pierces into the secret and sublime Mysteries of heavenly Truth; purged and prepared by spiritual Meditations, and daily Exercise of holy Duties. Blessed indeed are They, who disingage themselves from all worldly Incumbrances, and gain Leisure and Opportunities for attending continually upon God alone.

Consider this, my Soul, and shake off sensual Desires, which must be first abandoned, before thou can listen with due Reverence and Attention, to those things, which the Lord God will speak: And, O! what comfortable Words are those, *I am thy Peace, thy Life, thy Salvation, and exceeding great Reward. Come unto me, thou that art weary and heavy laden, and thou shalt find rest unto thy Soul. Set thy Affections on things above, and not on things on the Earth. For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.* What are all things here below, but dangerous and empty Delusions? And what could it profit a Man to gain, though it were all the Creatures, if he be forsaken and cast off by the Creator? In Him alone is Pleasure, and Bliss, and Glory; therefore let go those cheating Shadows and embrace the only substantial Good; Bid a final Adieu to the Deceits of the World, and place all thy Love and Endeavours upon thy God, for in his Service and Acceptance thou shalt attain the End of thy Wishes, The Fruit of thy Labours, solid Satisfaction and true Happiness.

John xiv. Gen. xvii. Matth. xi. Colos. iii. Cor. iv.

CHAP.

Chap. II.

God is in the ſmall ſtill Voice.

Diſciple.] *Speak, Lord, for thy Servant heareth. Behold, I am thy Servant and the Son of thy Hand-maid; O give me Underſtanding, that I may learn thy Commandments.* Incline my Soul to the Words of thy Mouth, which *drop down as the Rain upon the tender Herb, and diſtil gently, like Dew upon the Graſs.* The Iſraelites indeed beſought *Moſes* heretofore, *Speak thou unto us, and we will hear, but let not God ſpeak to us, leſt we dye.* But let it not be ſo done unto me, my God. I rather chooſe to make my humble Petition in the Prophet *Samuel*'s Form, *Speak Lord, for thy Servant heareth.* Let not *Moſes*, nor any of the Prophets be my Inſtructor, but do thou thy ſelf vouchſafe to teach me by thy ſelf. For thou art the Sourçe of all Their Light and Knowledge. They could not utter Truth without thy Inſpiration and heavenly Guidance; but Thou art Eſſential Wiſdom and Truth; and canſt, without their Miniſtry, communicate thy ſelf effectually to my Soul.

1 Sam. iii. Pſal. cxix.

Deut. xxxii.

Exod. xx. 19.

Their Words, alas! are Air and empty Sound, but Thine alone are Spirit and Life. Their Expreſſions may be proper, their Arguments moving, but unleſs thou break Silence, my Soul will ſtill continue deaf and inſenſible. They deliver the Words, but thou art the Interpreter, and letteſt me into the true and hidden Senſe of their abſtruce Oracles. Their Books are ſealed, and only Thy Hand can open and explain them. From Them we receive the Command, but only from Thee the Diſpoſition to Obey, and the whole Power of performing it. They ſhew the Way, but thou imparteſt the Strength to walk in it; All They

can do, is ſtill remote and without us. Thou only entreſt into the Soul, and, by a ſecret Conveyance, putſt Truth in the inward Parts. *Paul may plant, and Apollo water*, but except thou be pleaſed to *give the Increaſe*, the *Word will return unto thee void, and accompliſh* no part *of the End, whereto thou ſenteſt it.* The Voice of their Cry pierces our Ears; but the knowing what they Cry, and the Impreſſion upon our Hearts, is thy peculiar Gift.

1 Cor. iii.

Iſa. lv.

Therefore, I cannot but implore again thy Grace and Mercy, and beg, that *Moſes* may not ſpeak to me, but Thou, my Lord, my God, the Only and Eternal Truth, leſt I dye; Not by the Terrors of thy thundring Voice, but by the ineffectual Communications of thy Will. For if I be inſtructed and admoniſhed by the outward Miniſtration only, and be not inwardly diſpoſed and zealouſly affected to Obedience, the Advantages of Inſtruction will but aggravate my Condemnation. For this is the diſmal Conſequence of the Word *preached not profiting, when it is not mixed with Faith in them that hear it.* And mixed with Faith thou knoweſt it cannot be, except ſeconded and inforced by the Voice of thy Spirit, except thou incline me to love the Good I know, and enable me faithfully to fulfil the Doctrine I believe. *Speak therefore, Lord,* I ſay again; To thee thy Servant liſtens gladly, for *Thou haſt the Words of Eternal Life.* Speak powerfully to my Soul, and carry thy Saving Truths home to my Conſcience and Affections, that thy Words may bring Comfort and Peace, Reformation and Holineſs to thy attentive Servant, and to thy ſelf immortal Honour and Praiſe.

Heb. iv.

John vi.

CHAP.

Chap. III.

Of the General Disregard to God's Word, and the Obedience due to it.

Christ.] Since then, my Son, thou so passionately desirest to hear my Voice, Incline now thine Ears to my Words. Words, which well deserve, and will abundantly reward, thy most diligent Attention; For they are sweet and charming, far above all the engaging Arts of Human Eloquence; Useful and Instructive, beyond the most laboured Systems of Philosophy. The Wisdom of this World could not invent, or order, nor can it comprehend them. The mysterious Truths they declare are too strong for Human Sense to behold, nor canst thou enter into their Secrets, till guided by that Light from whence they flow. My Precepts are pure and spiritual, such as a carnal and impure Heart can find no Relish in. My every Word, of weight; and spoken, not to entertain the Curious, and tickle itching Ears, but to subdue the Heart, and command a strict Obedience. Hear therefore, but hear as becomes thee, with respectful Silence, and entire Submission; with profound and awful Humility; with an earnest Desire to be taught; and sincere and vigorous Resolutions of doing as thou art taught.

Disciple.] I own the mighty Favour, and heartily acknowledge, with thy Holy Prophet, That *Blessed is the Man, whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him in thy Law; That thou may'st give him Strength in time of Adversity, lest he fall away with the Ungodly.* Psal. xciv.

Christ.] That Prophet spoke what I inspired, and so did all those Holy Men of old, for they were all of my sending. Nor is my Care at all abated now, though the

the Effects of it may be leſs viſible. For I, who taught Them then, continue teaching ſtill; Nay, I direct my Speech to All, but All will not hear it. For there are Many deaf to all my Charms, and therefore deaf, because they ſtop their Ears; *hate my Inſtruction, and will none of my Reproofs.* They liſten to the World much rather than to God, and are more diſpoſed to obey their own corrupt and ſenſual, than his pure and heavenly, Will. The World invites them with ſhort and tranſitory, trifling and empty Joys, and they greedily engage in its Service; I covenant for eternal and exceellent Rewards; and the inſenſible Wretches will not conſider, or think them worth their Acceptance. This Folly is univerſal, For who among the Sons of Men, expreſſes half that Zeal and Earneſtneſs, that ſollicitous Deſire to pleaſe, and dutiful Fear to offend, in his Deportment towards me, which he does in Matters relating to this World, or in Obedience to Maſters upon Earth? Conſider this, and Bluſh for Shame; for What, but Shame and Confuſion of Face, can be the Effect of thy Reflection upon this unworthy Uſage, this moſt abſurd Folly?

Prov. 1.

A ſmall Preferment is eſteemed a valuable Conſideration for long and painful Journies. Men fly for it eagerly, and haſten all they can to get ground of their Competitors; This is every one's Care, and it is accounted a Reproach to be negligent in ſuch Purſuits. But, when Advancement to Heaven and Eternal Happineſs is offered, they are ſlothful and unactive, and ſcarce a Man to be found, who thinks it worth the while to mend his Pace, or ſets one Step forward to meet, or to ſecure, ſo glorious an Advantage. A little ſordid Gain engages all Mens Induſtry; A trifling Sum imbroils them in tedious and expenſive Suits; And Promiſes of things ſcarce worth their having, they are content to drudge for; to loſe the Eaſe of their Days, and the Sleep of their Nights, and think their

Toil

Toil and anxious Care well paid, if they can compass them at last: But a substantial and unchangeable Good, a Recompence greater than they know how to value justly, Immortal Glory, and the Honours of the Saints, are sunk so low in wretched Mens Esteem, that the least Pains and Hardship are thought too much for them.

And art thou not ashamed, lazy, insensible, grumbling Wretch, that the Children of this World should pursue Death and Ruine, with a more vigorous Industry and Zeal, than thou canst find in thy Heart to bestow upon Life and Happiness? Shall Toys and Vanities win more upon their Affections, than solid and true Good can upon Thine? Nay, even those Vanities whose very Enjoyment is empty, do often mock their Hopes, and are never enjoyed at all; Their Friends promise and deceive; They labour but cannot attain; But My Promises are without Repentance; None taxeth Me with Breach of Faith, or can complain, that his Dependence upon My Word hath at any time disappointed him. For I require only Love and Perseverance; And, if these be not wanting, I answer to the full, nay, I far exceed, my Servants largest Wishes and longing Expectations. Yet false and fickle Men can easily perswade, and the God, who cannot lye, calls and promises in vain. I am the sure Rewarder of all that diligently seek me; and if such meet with Sufferings and sharp Temptations, these are not Marks of my Displeasure, but wisely ordered, and kindly intended, to prove the Sincerity of my Servants Zeal, and to illustrate their Virtues.

Write then my Words in thy Heart; Grave them in deep and lasting Characters; Ponder them diligently, for thou shalt find them a seasonable Relief and necessary Support in the Day of Tryal and Adversity. What Reading only hath not taught thee, Affliction will interpret and make plain. For I do not always

always visit my Chosen alike. Sometimes the Comforts of my Grace are proper; at Others, the withdrawing those Comforts, and bringing their Patience and Constancy to the Touch, by outward Calamities, or inward Anguish of Spirit. Thus I daily train them up in Goodness, by chastising and making them hate their Sins, and cultivating and encouraging their Advancement in Virtue. The One Dispensation engages their Love of Me, the Other abates their Fondness for the World. But lost and wretched is that stupid Creature, upon whom these Methods make no Impression, For *He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not my Words, hath One that judgeth him in the last Day.*

John xii. 46.

Chap. IV.

A Prayer for Heavenly Instruction and Devotion.

Disciple.] O Lord, my God, Thou art my All, my Only Good; but Who, alas! am I, that I should take upon me to speak to so Great, so Glorious a Majesty? Poor sinful Dust and Ashes; a wretched Worm; less than the least of all thy Servants; much less, much viler and more despicable, than I dare to think, or am able to express or conceive. And this very Vileness, Lord, I beg thou would'st consider; that so my helpless desolate Condition may move thy tender Pity, to a miserable Creature, who neither is, nor hath, nor can do, any thing, without thee. For Thou only art Good, and Holy, and Powerful; and that of Power so boundless, of Mercy so diffusive, that thou fillest all things with thy Goodness, and none but those guilty Souls, who refuse to partake of thy Grace, are shut out from its kindly In-

Influences. Behold me then hungring and thirſting after thy Righteouſneſs, and let me not be ſent empty away. Call up thy Bowels, and remember thy Compaſſions and old Loving-kindneſſes; and fill my Soul with thy Grace and heavenly Diſpoſitions, that it may be a Dwelling fit to entertain that bleſſed Inhabitant, who will not take up his Abode, in defiled and deſolate Places.

But how can I furniſh a Houſe for my Lord, except he vouchſafe to aſſiſt and ſupply my Wants? How can I ſuſtain the Miſeries and Temptations of a troubleſom dangerous World, except thou graciouſly interpoſe, and ſupport my Weakneſs? Turn not then thy Face away from me; neither delay thy Fatherly Care; for if thou grant not refreſhing Dews, and water not my Heart with thy Grace, it will remain a dry and barren Ground. Teach me, dear God, to know and do thy Will, and, with ſincere Humility, and indefatigable Zeal, enable me to perſevere in my Obedience. For Thou art my Wiſdom, and my Righteouſneſs; my Infirmities are not hid from Thee; Thou knoweſt me perfectly, and underſtoodeſt all my Defects, not only before I was born, but even long before the World it ſelf was made.

CHAP. V.

Walk humbly with thy God, and Worſhip Him in Truth.

Chriſt.] I Do indeed, my Son, know thy Frailties, and thy Dangers, but let not theſe diſcourage thy Endeavours. Seek and love the Truth, and let thy Heart be right with me, and all ſhall be well at laſt. For Truth and Sincerity will be thy Protection,

ction, and defend thee from the Assaults of the Devil, and the Attempts of wicked and deceitful Men.

John viii. Those who are *thus set free, shall be free indeed*, nor shall the Seducements or the Discouragements of Enemies to the Truth be able to insnare or divert them from their Duty.

Disciple.] True Lord. And this Perswasion makes me more earnestly implore thy Assistance. That thou, who art Truth it self, wouldst in much Mercy condescend to instruct, and direct me; to preserve and protect me; to break the Snares of the Ungodly to pieces, to deliver my Soul, and establish me unto the End; To purge me from all corrupt and inordinate Affections, that my own happy Experience may convince me of what I already believe, and render thy Service perfect Freedom.

Christ.] My Children cannot be more zealously disposed to ask these Blessings, than I am ready and pleased to grant them. Hear therefore the Truth, and how thou mayest recommend thy self to my Favour and Acceptance. Reflect with sad Remorse upon thy past Offences; let the Remembrance of these render thee vile in thy own Eyes; and take heed, that no Confidence in thy best Actions, swell thee with vain Conceits of thy own Deserts. For, sure it is, thou art a Sinner, laden with Guilt and many grievous Infirmities; prone in thy own Nature to Vanity, easily seduced, quickly diverted from good Resolutions, and oversome by very slight Temptations. In short, No Excellence belongs to thee, which can in any degree justifie thy Pride or Boasting; but infinite Occasions there are to exercise thy Humility and Lamentation, infinitely more in truth, than thou canst be duly sensible of.

Let not then the mistaken Value of any thing thou art or dost, delude thee with false Appearances of Worth and Perfection; Let not thy Affections be seduced

duced to follow vain and wretched Objects, or think any Advantage can deserve thy Praise or Admiration, thy Love and Pains; except such only as are fix'd and eternal. Let Truth be thy chief Delight, for This is unchangeable; Let thy own Unworthiness be the chief Object of thy Hatred and Contempt, for this is the vilest, the justest thing, upon which thy Displeasure can discharge it self. Fear and decline no Calamity comparably to Sin. For no Loss, no worldly Disappointment or Disaster, can have so fatal Consequences, as the Loss of a good Conscience and God's Favour, by transgressing his righteous Commands.

Some Men are more concerned for Subtlety of Knowledge in Religion, than for an humble and sincere Obedience. They are acted by a Spirit of Pride and Curiosity, and affect to penetrate the Mysteries of Faith; and value themselves much more for being able learnedly to dispute for Truth, than for adorning it by their Lives, and rendring that Knowledge effectual to Salvation. These Men frequently fall into dangerous Snares. I set my Face against their Arrogance, and suffer them to perish through the Vanity of their own Imaginations.

But do Thou employ thy Mind upon other sorts of Inquiries, and account it greater Wisdom, to get a perfect Knowledge of thy own Works, than those of Almighty God. *His Ways are unsearchable and past finding out*; but thy own are Rom. xi. necessary to be nicely examined. And the Consideration of the Evil thou hast done, and the Good thou hast left undone, will turn to better account, than thy Scholastick Speculations, concerning the Divine Nature and Counsels. Some place their Religion in Images, some in good Books, some in an outward Shew and Pomp of Devotion, measuring their Piety, by the Prayers they say, the Sermons they hear, the Meals they abstain from; Others honour me with their Lips, and

and talk familiarly of me, whoſe Hearts I am as utter a Stranger to, as their allowing me no place in their Thoughts and Affections can make me. But ſome again, without ſuch formal Pretences, are Men of true ſpiritual Wiſdom, and inward Purity; their Deſires and Converſation are in Heaven, and earthly Entertainments are no longer welcome to them; they even grudge thoſe Hours, which the neceſſary Cares for ſupporting theſe Bodies cut off from the greater Concerns of their Souls. And Theſe are the Men, that lend a willing Ear, and bring a Temper truly teachable to the Inſtructions of my Spirit: In Them he reigns and triumphs. For, having vanquiſhed the corrupt Inclinationsof Fleſh, and inſpired them with a true Chriſtian Bravery of Soul, they deſpiſe the treacherous Vanities of this World, and lay out all their Love and Labour upon the Joys of that better World, which till God thinks fit to admit them into, they ſtrive to anticipate, by keeping their Minds Night and Day intent upon it.

CHAP. VI.

The Power of the Love of GOD.

Diſciple.] I Laud and magnifie thy glorious Name, O Father of Heaven, Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for all the Goodneſs and tender Compaſſions, with which thon haſt been pleaſed to remember and relieve my Miſery. For unto thy Loving-kindneſs alone, O Father of Mercies and God of all Comfort, are owing all the Supports, with which the Soul of thy unworthy Servant hath been at any time refreſhed in the midſt of my Trouble. And therefore to Thee alone be the Praiſe. To Thee, O Father, with thy

thy only begotten Son, and the Bleſſed Spirit the Comforter, will I render Honour and Thankſgiving, for evermore. Deſcend then, bleſſed God, into that Soul, for which thou haſt expreſſed ſo great a Tenderneſs, and let thy Preſence fill me with Gladneſs. For Thou art my Health, my Joy and my Glory, my Hope and my Refuge in the Day of Diſtreſs.

I muſt confeſs with Sorrow, that my Love is weak, and my Virtue imperfect; nor can the One be ſupported without thy Grace, nor the Other be cheriſhed, unleſs thou fan the holy Fire, and feed it with thy heavenly Comforts. O viſit me then with thy Salvation, and make me to improve under thy holy Diſcipline. Deliver and purifie my Heart from all corrupt Affections, and irregular Paſſions; Heal my ſpiritual Diſeaſes, and take away that Droſs and Filth, which obſtructs my purer Delights of Divine Love, diſcompoſes my Patience, and ſhakes my Intentions of Perſeverance.

For Love is great and powerful, an excellent Virtue, and mighty Advantage in Well-doing. It lightens the heavieſt Burdens, makes Difficulties eaſie, and ſmooths the rugged Ways of Duty; Takes out the Bitterneſs of Sufferings, and gives them a delightful Reliſh. This is the Principle, which fires us with a vigorous and active Zeal, inſpires brave and noble Attempts, and ſpurs us on with an impatient Deſire of ſtill higher Degrees of Perfection. For Love ever labours to be uppermoſt, and diſdains to take up with low and vulgar Attainments. It hates Confinement, and would fain get looſe from all worldly Affections; that ſo its inward and ſpiritual Proſpects may not be intercepted by any temporal Good or Evil, which darken and block it up. In Love is the Perfection of Pleaſure, and Strength; it is higher than Heaven, broader than the Sea; it fills the ſpacious Univerſe, for it is born of God; The firſt and beſt of all his

Creatures, and, as it came from Him, ſo it never reſts till it have got above all finite Beings, and center again in that Only, that Infinite Good, from whence it originally ſprung.

The Perſon acted by it flyes with eager Haſt, does every thing with Cheerfulneſs and Pleaſure, and ſuffers no Impediments to ſtop him in his Courſe: He gives all things liberally, and yet poſſeſſes All, becauſe his Soul is united to that Supreme Good, in and from whom is all Perfection. He looks not ſo much at the Gift as the Giver, and be the Quality of that, what it will, it only ſerves to render him more grateful to its Author. Love knows no Bounds, no Meaſure; but thinks it can never do enough; and attempts things even above its Strength, Not conſidering ſo much what it is able, as what it is deſirous and diſpoſed, to effect; The Vehemence of Deſire takes off all Senſe of Difficulty, and thinks nothing ſo great, but that it may and ought to aim at it. And hence proceed thoſe mighty, and aſtoniſhing Atchievements, which Love does daily bring to paſs, where the Fire continues ſtrong, and is not damped by Sloth and Faint-heartedneſs.

Love is eternally awake, never tired with Labour, nor oppreſſed with Affliction, nor diſcouraged by Fear; But like a clear and ſtrong Flame is ever mounting upward, and makes its way through all Oppoſition. It cries continually in the Ears, (for fervent Love is that Cry which pierces the Ears) of the moſt Higheſt, and all the Language of devout Souls inflamed with it, is to this Effect: *My* God, *my* Love, *thou art my All, and all mine; and I am entirely Thine.* Enlarge my Heart, and make me capable of yet more Love, that I may feel and feaſt upon the Sweetneſs of the delightful Affection, and even melt away and loſe my ſelf in the Extaſies and Charms of this heavenly Diſpoſition. Increaſe and blow up this divine Flame, that, not content

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to excel others, I may daily excel my self. Teach me the Song of Love, and receive me up on high, to Him in whom my Soul delighteth, and fill me with such Raptures of Joy and Praise, that even Sense and Life may be swallowed up in Blifs. Let me love Thee much more than my self; nay, love my self and all good Men, to whom thou art dear, only in and for Thee; For so hast thou commanded in that Law of Love, which is but as it were a Beam and Efflux of thy own Glorious and Divine Excellence.

The Love of God is nimble in its Motions, sincere in its Intentions, ardent and zealous in Devotion, sweet to the Soul, brave in Attemping, patient in Induring, faithful in Executing, prudent in Action, slow in Resentment, generous and manly, and seeks not to please the Person's self, but the Person beloved. For, where a Man seeks his own Advantage only, there Interest, not Love, is the Principle upon which he moves. Love is cautious and circumspect, upright and humble, not soft and effeminate, not fickle and fanciful; not fond of Vanities; but sober and grave, chast and refined, constant and sedate, severe and reserved. This disposes us to Submission and Respect towards our Superiours; to a mean and modest Opinion of our selves; to Gratitude and Devotion towards God; It inspires Hope and holy Trust, even in Times of Calamity, and Discomfort; And necessary it is that it should do so, since no Man is so happy as to love without Pain, or always to live under the Light of God's Countenance, so as that no Clouds should ever intercept the cheering Warmth of his Favour, and create some dark Intervals.

That Man therefore does not deserve the Character of One that loves God, who is not disposed and content to suffer any Afflictions, which the Divine Providence sees fit to inflict; or thinks much to do whatever his Will declares fit to be performed. In a word,

The hardeſt and moſt unpalatable Proofs of our Virtue, beſt declare the Fervency and Sincerity of it; And, if Diſaſters or calamitous Accidents cool or draw off our Affections, this is an Argument, that a Man is not yet, what the Apoſtle requires we ſhould all be, *Rooted and grounded in Love.*

Epheſ. iii. 17.

Chap. VII.

The Tryal of true Love.

Chriſt.] I Have obſerved, my Son, thy Notions of Divine Love; but Thou, alas! art not yet arrived to that reſolute Bravery and Prudence there deſcribed.

Diſciple.] Lord, make me ſenſible wherein I fail, and teach me how to mend it.

Chriſt.] A ſmall Temptation ſhocks thy Obedience. Thou boggleſt at Difficulties, and falleſt from thy own Stedfaſtneſs, if I ſeem to withdraw my Favour. The Comforts and Aſſiſtances of Grace are to be wiſh'd with Zeal, but not with Impatience; Nor mayeſt thou ſo ſet thy Heart upon them, as preſently to recoil, if ſuch Supplies do not at all times anſwer thy Expectation. I hide my Face to try thy Courage. For true Chriſtian Magnanimity is moſt eminently ſeen in Troubles and Diſtreſſes; in turning the deaf Ear to all thoſe crafty Inſinuations of the Enemy, which take the Advantage of Melancholy and deep Perplexity of Heart, to ruin and ſeduce unſtable Souls by tempting them to Deſpair. This Virtue rejoyces in Proſperity, but does it with ſuch Temper, as not to be offended and fall away by reaſon of Adverſity.

He that loves prudently, keeps his Eyes upon the Giver, conſiders the Kindneſs and Diſpoſition of his Friend,

Friend, and values the Gift by that, not by its own Quality and intrinſick Worth; He finds more real Satisfaction in my Affection, than in the moſt profuſe and deſirable Benefits, which flow from it. Not that I would condemn all Doubts and ſad Miſgivings, for thoſe are incident to the beſt Men; And the Infirmities of Nature do not admit ſuch perfect Evenneſs of Mind, as is always affected alike with the Love and Delights of Holineſs. Thoſe ſenſible Pleaſures that good Men ſometimes feel themſelves tranſported with, are the Effect of Bounty and Favour, and great Indulgence; not neceſſary and inſeparable Conſequences of Virtue. The ſweet Foretaſts of heavenly Joys, ſuch as you cannot depend upon, till brought to the Fruition of that Land of Promiſe; And therefore no juſt Concluſions can be drawn from thence, to the prejudice of thoſe who want them, becauſe in this Life they are given at Diſcretion, and frequently make way for a ſeverer and more ſeaſonable Diſcipline. And when that Diſcipline takes place, then to perſiſt in doing well, to ſtrive manfully againſt all the Reluctancies of frail Fleſh and Blood, and hold out in deſpight of all the Importunities and diſcouraging Suggeſtions of the Tempter, This is a Proof of true Spiritual Bravery, and entitles ſuch valiant Combatants to a noble Reward and exceeding bright Crown.

Let Reaſon therefore, and a well-grounded Faith, not Fancy and Imagination, govern thy Behaviour: And, after what manner ſoever thy Soul is affected, let thy Purpoſes of Obedience be ſtill the ſame, and thy Perſeverance unbroken. Sometimes perhaps thou art all Rapture and Joy, and theſe Extaſies are not what the prophane World ſuppoſe, mere Dreams and Deluſions; ſometimes again thou wilt relapſe into Weakneſs, and Wandrings. Theſe are not thy Choice, but thy Misfortune; Nor doſt thou create them to

thy ſelf, but ſuffer them with much Regret. Now what is not the Man's own Act, ſhall never be imputed to him as a Fault; and what is thus by God's Permiſſion, or the Frailty of Nature, if rightly managed, will tend to thy Advantage, and rather improve, than endanger, thy Virtue.

This indeed you muſt know and conſtantly remember, That the inveterate Enemy of Souls, is ever labouring by all means to cool your Zeal. He watches and greedily takes hold of all Occaſions to ſlacken your Devotion, to prevail with you to neglect, or abate of, your Prayers and other holy Exerciſes; to divert your Thoughts of Chriſt and his Sufferings, and fix them upon Objects of a different kind; to beat you off from that ſtrict Guard, which ought always to be kept upon your Soul; and to undermine your good Intentions and repeated Reſolutions. He conveys many looſe and wicked Thoughts into your Heart, uſes a thouſand Slights and Artifices, to repreſent Religion a tireſom, tedious, and unneceſſary Thing, and to draw off your Attendance upon God in Prayers, in hearing his Word, in reading the Holy Scriptures. And happy he thinks himſelf, if by degrees he can draw you to a Diſuſe of theſe things; For nothing more provokes his Malice, and croſſes his Deſigns, than to ſee Men frequently upon their Knees, zealous in diſcovering and confeſſing their Sins; devout and attentive Comers to Church; and conſtant Receivers of the Lord's Supper. When therefore he would perſwade you to be cold and remiſs in any Matter of this nature, be ſure to give no Credit to his falſe and wheedling Inſinuations, for they are ſo many Snares laid to captivate and deſtroy you. Turn ſmartly back upon him, with a *Get thee behind me Satan:* "Bluſh, if thou canſt, unclean Spirit, at "thy own treacherous Villany; I am well aware of "thy deadly Baits; and ſenſible, that Hell and Death

"are

" are upon the Hook; Thy ſly Deceits are loſt upon " Me, for I am reſolved already, and my Jeſus, who " vanquiſhed thee upon the Croſs, will aſſiſt my Weak- " neſs, and enable me to overcome thy Temptations. " Think not to terrifie me with Difficulties, for " Death and Sufferings are light Calamities, in com- " pariſon of Guilt and Sin; and theſe I infinitely ra- " ther chooſe, than once to comply with thy wicked " Motions. Begone then, and for ever hold thy " Peace; for I will ſtop my Ears, and am from this " Minute inflexibly deaf to thy moſt troubleſom Sol- " licitations. Thou thinkeſt to run down a poor weak " Mortal, but even that Mortal is a Match *for thee,* " *through Chriſt that ſtrengthens him.* And ſtrengthen " me he will, for *the Lord is my Light and Salvation,* " *whom then ſhall I fear? The Lord is the* Pſal. xxvii. " *Strength of my Life, of whom then ſhall I* " *be afraid? Though an Hoſt were banded together againſt* " *me, yet will I not be diſmayed, for the Lord is my Helper,* " *and my God is the Rock of my Confidence.*

Fight therefore the good Fight, and follow the Captain of thy Salvation, like a ſtout Soldier. And, if at any time thou loſe ground, through Humane Infirmities, rally thy Forces again quickly, and enter upon a ſecond Engagement with redoubled Vigour; not doubting ſeaſonable Recruits from Me. But, if at any time thou prove Victorious, let not this Succeſs exalt thee beyond meaſure. For Pride and Arrogance are of fatal conſequence, they often end in dangerous Errors, and are juſtly puniſhed with almoſt incurable Blindneſs. Let the frequent Examples of vain Men, undone by their own Folly and my juſt Indignation, be ſet before thy Eyes, as ſo many Sea-marks, to warn thee from ſteering the ſame dangerous Courſe; And the greater Conqueſts thou obtaineſt over the Devil and thy own Frailty, the more humble and cautious let theſe Advantages make thee in thy Conduct; and

the more juſt to God, in aſcribing the whole Succeſs and Glory to the powerful Aſſiſtances of his Grace.

Chap. VIII.

Grace muſt be received without Oſtentation.

Chriſt.] My Son, when thou feeleſt thy Soul warmed with Devotion and holy Zeal for my Service, it will be adviſable to decline all thoſe Methods of publiſhing it to the World, which vain Men are ſo induſtrious to take, and content thy ſelf with its being known to God and thy own Conſcience. Rather endeavour to moderate and ſuppreſs thoſe pompous Expreſſions of it, in which Some place the very Perfection of Zeal. Think meanly of thy own Virtues. Boaſt not of that Grace, whereby thou art capable of differing from another. But let the Remembrance of thy own Unworthineſs make thee fear the loſs of Gifts, which thou didſt not deſerve ever to have. But This is not only an undeſerved, it is alſo a very ſhort and uncertain, Privilege; for the brighteſt and warmeſt Zeal is apt to languiſh and wax cold; and unleſs Men could aſſure themſelves of ſuch a Degree of Grace, as would alter and fix theſe variable Natures of theirs, the Fervours of Religious and Holy Deſires can never be conſtant and equal.

While therefore thou enjoyeſt theſe pleaſing pious Comforts, humble thy Soul with Reflections upon thy Impotence and Miſery, thy Coldneſs and Deadneſs, when thou haſt them not. And conſider withal, that the Improvement and Commendation of a Chriſtian's Virtue, conſiſts, not only in the thankful Uſe of Grace, but in a modeſt, humble, and reſigned Temper, which can

can bear its being taken away without Murmuring or Deſpondency; ſtill exciting and encouraging it ſelf, ſtill continuing the ſame Diligence in holy Duties; and never ſuffering Sloth, or Deſpair, or Diſcontent, to abate one whit of a Man's beſt Endeavours, to do the utmoſt his Condition is capable of.

This is an Excellence which very few come up to; Idleneſs and Impatience are the uſual Effects of Spiritual Diſappointments; which yet is moſt unreaſonable, if we think at all, in whoſe Diſpoſal Theſe, as well as all other, Succeſſes are. For Man cannot command Events; God is ſole Maſter of his own Favours. He gives to whom he pleaſes; Nor will he be limited, otherwiſe than by his own Wiſdom, what, or how much, or in what time and manner, he ſhall give. And even, when he is moſt liberal, Men may convert his beſt Gifts into Occaſions of their own Deſtruction. Thus ſome Men of a bold ungoverned Zeal aſpire at things beyond their Strength, and expreſs more Vehemence than Conduct in their Actions. They are perfectly carried out of themſelves with Eagerneſs; forget they are ſtill poor Inſects upon Earth, and think of nothing leſs than building their Neſt in Heaven; Now Theſe are often left to themſelves, and taught, by ſad Experience, that the faint Flutterings of Man are weak and ineffectual, and that none ſoars to Heaven, except I aſſiſt his Flight, and mount him upon my own Wings.

It is therefore highly expedient, that Perſons of more Zeal than Experience, ſhould not proceed upon their own falſe Meaſures of themſelves, but refer their Proceedings to the Guidance and better Judgment of ſome Perſons, whom long Time and much Obſervation hath taught to temper thoſe vain Conceits they are apt to entertain of their own Strength, and to proportion their Undertakings to their Circumſtances. But This is a Submiſſion which Humility muſt qualifie them

them for. For He who is wiſe in his own Eyes, ſeldom endures to be directed by another. And this Conſideration makes a very moderate Degree of Knowledge, attended with a modeſt and governable Mind, much more ſafe and eligible, than the higheſt Attainments with Pride and Self-conceit. The mighty Tranſports and great Satisfaction Men frequently feel from their own Improvement in Goodneſs, are of dangerous conſequence, if they be ſuffered to deſtroy the Remembrance of a Man's former Weakneſs and his Fears of Relapſing into Sin again. And, on the other hand, theſe Fears may run into Exceſs, if Difficulties tempt Men to Deſpair, and beget melancholy Diſtruſts of God's Ability and Readineſs to relieve and Reſcue them by the Succours of that Grace which knows how to ſcatter and defeat the ſtrongeſt Temptations.

The ſame Diſpoſition of Soul, which leads to Security in Times of Proſperity and Peace, inclines to Fearfulneſs and Dejection of Mind in the Day of Adverſity and Conflict. For would a Man but guard himſelf againſt vain Confidences, and proceed always with Caution and Prudence, when his Graces and his Hopes are at the higheſt; This would preſerve him from thoſe Dangers, which unwary Heat and too ſanguine Hopes are apt to involve him in. And therefore, when you form to your ſelf the faireſt and moſt promiſing Expectations, it will be ſeaſonable to conſider, what may become of you, if God ſhould hide his Face, and abate or wholly withdraw thoſe cheering Comforts, which now ſo much exalt you. And ſo again, when theſe are interrupted, ſupport your Spirits in thoſe dark Intervals, with the Hope, that Day may break upon you again, and that this Night of Affliction is prolonged, to make you more adviſed, and get the greater Honour.

For

For ſuch Tryals as theſe are more for the Advantage of my faithful Servants, than a conſtant Succeſſion of Proſperity and Conſolation could poſſibly be. They muſt needs be ſo; ſince Virtue does not conſiſt in Abundance of Illumination and Knowledge; but in Lowlineſs of Mind, in Meekneſs and Charity, in a Mind entirely reſigned to God, and ſincerely diſpoſed to ſerve and pleaſe him; in a juſt Senſe of a Man's own Vileneſs, and not only thinking very meanly of One's ſelf, but being well content to be ſo thought of by Others.

Chap. IX.

Of Acknowledging our Unworthineſs before God.

Diſciple.] *Behold, now I take upon me to ſpeak unto my Lord, who am but Duſt and Aſhes*, vile and ſinful Duſt and Aſhes? For, ſhould I entertain any better Opinion of my ſelf, I make my God my Enemy, and ſtand convicted by the undeniable Teſtimony, and juſt Reproaches, of my own guilty Conſcience. But if I humble my Soul, caſt off all vain Imaginations of Merit, and think my ſelf that wretched thing I really am, thy Grace exalts me, thy Light cheers and ſupports me, and all that groundleſs Arrogance, to which my corrupt Heart is naturally diſpoſed, vaniſhes into nothing. O! give me then a right Underſtanding of my ſelf; Help me truly to diſcern, what I am now, what I was originally, and whence I come. That I am nothing, and proceeded out of nothing, and, if deſtitute of thy Grace, have nothing left, but what I had much better be without, even Sin and Infirmity. And yet as vile, as ſinful, as dejected, as I am of my ſelf, as ſoon as thy bright Gen. xviii.

bright Beams of Favour are caſt upon me, my Weakneſs is made ſtrong, and my Heavineſs turned into Joy: I cannot obſerve the ſudden wondrous Change without aſtoniſhment, and am not able to account for the happy Exaltation of my Nature, which, though by its own weight inclined to ſink perpetually, and, by a fatal tendency to Sin and Hell, preſs'd down with a Load of Fleſh and Frailty, is yet, by the mighty Operations of Grace, enabled to aſpire to ſpiritual and refined Objects, and take noble Flights to Thee and Heaven.

This I am duly ſenſible is the ſtrange Effect of thy free Grace alone, preventing my Deſires, inſpiring noble Thoughts, aſſiſting my Weakneſſes, ſupplying my Wants, reſcuing me from Dangers innumerable; which, without theſe powerful Succours, muſt unavoidably deſtroy and ſwallow me up. For an inordinate Love of my ſelf was formerly my ruine, but a ſincere Love of Thee, and entire Dependence upon thy Goodneſs, recovers and reſtores me; And the more I love and truſt in Thee, the leſs reaſon I find to value and have any Confidence in any thing of my own. For Thou, O deareſt Redeemer, art bountiful and kind, far beyond my Deſerts: My Deſerts! Alas! They are none at all, or worſe than none: But Thou exceedeſt even my largeſt Deſires, and giveſt more, infinitely more, than I either dare preſume to ask, or am able to expreſs.

Eternal Thanks and Praiſe be therefore rendred to my God, for that unſpeakable Goodneſs, which does not diſdain to beſtow the precious Gifts of his Grace and Spirit, upon a Wretch unworthy the leaſt of all his Mercies. Yea, Bleſſed and Adored be that Liberality and Long-ſuffering, which, in deſpight of all our Provocations, continues to engage thoſe by Kindneſs, who, by their former Ingratitude and Abuſe of it, had juſtly forfeited all future Favours; And, by many

many excellent Arts and holy Importunities, invites and draws Men to himſelf and their own Happineſs, who have an Averſion to both. Even ſo, ſweet Jeſus, extend thy Compaſſion, and continue thy Care of Us, who are too prone to neglect Thee, and ruine our ſelves Oh! bring us to thy ſelf, by thankful, humble, pious Diſpoſitions; for We our ſelves are Nothing, and Thou our Holineſs and Health, our only Strength and Salvation.

Chap. X.

Of Doing All to the Glory of GOD.

Chriſt.] The ſure and only Way to Happineſs, is, to make Me, My Son, the chief and ultimate End of all thy Actions and Deſires. By This thy Sincerity will beſt be proved; by This thy Mind refined and purified, from all thoſe ſorded Intereſts and partial Reſpects, which are apt to debauch Humane Nature, too much of it ſelf addicted to private Gain and Selfiſhneſs, and thoſe falſe Proſpects of Happineſs, which the Love of this World vainly propoſes. For, as ſoon as any Man deſcends to theſe, and ſeeks *himſelf* in all he does, he finds his own Inability to compaſs his Intentions, and grows barren and unprofitable. Keep Me then conſtantly in view, and aim at nothing but the Advancement of my Honour: Which is indeed but reaſonable and juſt, ſince I am the Firſt and Perfect Good; the Source from whence all things flow, and therefore all of Right return to, and ſhould center at laſt in Me again. I ask but of my own, the Tribute and Acknowledgment of the Succeſſes given by my Providence, of the Actions performed by Virtue of my Concurrence, of the very Facul-

Faculties and Powers originally inſpired by my creating Spirit.

The High and Honourable, as well as Mean and Low, the Rich and Poor, all drink of this common Fountain, and the moſt Powerful of the Sons of Men can do nothing, till furniſhed with Ability from hence. This Spring is inexhauſtible, and They who receive moſt, and are grateful in their Returns, I water with more liberal Meaſures of Grace. Them that honour me, I never fail to honour, and bleſs in a viſible and eminent manner; But, if Men glory in any thing but the Lord, I blaſt their Devices, diſappoint their Hopes, make them aſhamed of their vain Boaſtings. For ſo have I ordered Matters by my Providence, that no true laſting Satisfaction ſhall ever fill that Heart, which ſets its Affections upon private and paltry Advantages. Croſſes from without, and Perplexity from within, are the certain Conſequence of worldly Deſires, and ſelfiſh Principles.

If therefore thou haſt received or done any good thing, take care of miſplacing the Honour and Thanks due for it, upon thy ſelf, or any other Perſon. For This is robbing God of his Due, from whom Men receive whatever they have, or are; and ſtand in Duty and Equity bound, to pay him their Acknowledgments. Since therefore the Whole is my Gift, when I demand the whole Thanks and Praiſe, I demand but the Product of my own; and this is what, as I injure no Man in requiring, ſo I reſolve never to depart from.

This is the true Principle of Juſtice. Neceſſary to be conſidered, and thoroughly ſubmitted to, becauſe it checks and utterly confounds that other moſt pernicious Principle of Pride and Vain-glory, to which Mankind are ſo exceeding prone. Nor is it leſs conducive to their Happineſs, than to their Duty; for, where this generous Love and Regard of Me takes place,

place, it does not only engage my Favour, but ſecures the Man from Envy, and Diſcontent, Partiality, and every other Paſſion, that uſes to torment little and worldly-minded People. For this reſpectful Deference, and fervent Love of God enlarges the Soul, and fills it with great and truly noble Thoughts. And therefore this is a certain Mark of true and heavenly Wiſdom to make Me its only Joy, and Hope; For, how can He be wiſe, who does not ſee, that God is the Perfection and Original of all Good, and that the neceſſary Conſequence of his being ſo, is, that He is to be Praiſed, Honoured, Admired, in, and for, and above all. Since all the Good which Men pretend to eſteem, is by Communication from him; an Emanation from his Fulneſs, an Effect of that Sole, that Univerſal Cauſe?

Chap. XI.

God's Service is perfect Freedom.

Diſciple.] I Will again take the Confidence to ſpeak unto the Lord; Nor ought I indeed to hold my Peace, but addreſs my ſelf to Thee, my Lord, and God, my heavenly King, that ſitteſt on thy Throne far above the Skies, and thus will I proclaim thy Mercies and my own Happineſs. How pure, O Lord, how ſweet, how exquiſite are the Pleaſures thou reſerveſt for them that fear thee, that delight themſelves in thy Love, that are entirely devoted to thy Service? No Tongue can worthily expreſs the wondrous Joys, the Tranſports, and raviſhing Extaſies, which fill theſe pious Souls, enflamed with the Love, and employed in the Contemplation, of Thee. For This is a Subject, boundleſs as thy Goodneſs; That Good-

Goodneſs, which exerted it ſelf in commanding me out of Nothing, and, when that Being which thou gaveſt was rendred liable to eternal Miſery, a freſh, and yet more valuable Inſtance of thy Mercy, was that of beſtowing upon me a new and better Life, when I was worſe than nothing. For thou hadſt Compaſſion on my Weakneſs, and my Wandrings Thou ſoughteſt, and with tender Care broughteſt back thy loſt Sheep, taughteſt me the right Way, helpedſt me to walk in it, and didſt inſtruct and guide me in thy Love.

O Thou overflowing Spring of endleſs Love, how ſhall I worthily magnifie thee, how can I forget thee; Thee, who in my loweſt Ebb of Miſery, didſt condeſcend ſo graciouſly, ſo effectually to remember Me? Whoſe Kindneſs reſcued me from Death, and far exceeded all my Hopes; reſtored me to that Favour, which my Sins had forfeited, and ſhewed it ſelf a Friend to that Wretch, who was become thine, and his own, Enemy. *What ſhall I render to the Lord for all the Benefits he hath done unto me?* If I reſolve to ſerve thee, yet how poor a Tribute is that, to Him whom all created Nature is bound to ſerve? This is ſo far from a ſufficient Return, that I ought rather to admire thy Mercy, and eſteem it an Honour to my ſelf, when thou vouchſafeſt to accept the Service of ſo poor, ſo worthleſs a Creature, and doſt not diſdain to reckon me among thoſe, whom thou ſuffereſt to do thee Homage.

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For even in this I pay thee but thy own, ſince I and all I have are thine. But why do I ſpeak of Serving thee, when by a moſt aſtoniſhing Condeſcenſion, even Thou, the mighty God, art pleaſed to ſerve me? For this is the Effect of that excellently good Providence, which hath contrived and ordered Heaven and Earth, and all the Creatures, in ſuch a manner, that they ſhould be uſeful and beneficial to Mankind; Which hath appointed bleſſed Spirits above for Guards and Mi-

Miniſters to the Heirs of Salvation; And, which is moſt ſurprizing, when Thou thy ſelf, for my ſake, haſt taken upon thee the Form of a Servant, and wert made a frail, an afflicted Man! When Thou didſt give thy Life for undone Sinners, and ſtill doſt give thy ſelf in Grace, and haſt engaged to give thy ſelf, even the full and eternal Fruition of thy glorious God-head, to every ſincere Believer.

O! that it were in my Power to make a ſuitable Return, for Love which paſſes, not my Thanks only, but even my Knowledge! O! that my Ways were made ſo direct that my whole Life might be one continued Act of Gratitude and Obedience! Nay, ſuch is my Infirmity, that I muſt be content to wiſh, that any one Day of that Life might be employed as it ought in thy Service. I know, O Lord, that Thou art worthy to receive all Duty, and Honour and Praiſe for ever. I am ſenſible, that Thou art my rightful Lord, and I thy poor Servant, That the utmoſt I can do is thy juſt Due, and that I ought to take unſpeakable Delight in Thanking and Obeying Thee; That nothing elſe but this ſhould give me any Satisfaction, and that, when I have laid my ſelf out entirely upon it, I ſtill have done too little. This is the real Perſwaſion, this is the earneſt Deſire of my Soul, and where my Power falls ſhort of my Inclination, there do Thou, I beſeech thee, ſtrengthen and ſupply what is wanting by thy Grace; that my Deeds and Deportment may bear Teſtimony and Proportion to my pious Diſpoſition.

To be the meaneſt of thy Servants is the higheſt Advancement; To deſpiſe and forſake all for Thee, is true Riches and Honour. They who thus enter themſelves into thy Family, and cheerfully undertake this Task, ſhall have a glorious Reward; and will feel the Pleaſures of this World, infinitely paid, infinitely outdone, by the better and larger Amends of Grace and

Divine Comforts in exchange. They who thus bind themſelves to thee, that abandon worldly Cares, and attend to the One thing neceſſary, attain to true and generous Freedom of Soul; And the ſtrait Way of thy Commandments, is the only perfect Law of Liberty. Oh happy Confinement! which ſets Men at large from the Slavery of Sin, from worldly Cares and Incumbrances, from the inſupportable Tyranny of unruly Appetites and domineering Paſſions! O bleſſed Dependence! which makes us of the moſt high God's Retinue, raiſes us up to a Level with the Angels, renders us Dear to the Almighty, a Terrour to evil Spirits, Conquerors over our greateſt and fierceſt Enemy, and recommends us to the Love, the Praiſe, the Imitation of all good Men. Who would not greedily embrace ſuch a Service, where the very Work is pleaſant, the Encouragements paid down in hand noble and great, and the Wages promiſed in Recompence for our Labours, Happineſs exquiſite, unſpeakable, and everlaſting?

Chap. XII.

Of Regulating our Deſires.

Chriſt.] YEt ſtill, my Son, there are many things, in which thou art not ſufficiently Inſtructed.

Diſciple.] Lord, be thou pleaſed to let me know, and enable me to receive, and do, them.

Chriſt.] Thy Deſires muſt be reduced into Subjection, and my Will take place in every thing; Nor muſt thy own private Intereſt, but the Zeal and Regard for my Honour, and the Obedience due to my Commands, be the governing Principle of all thy Actions.

Actions. You feel Desires, like inward Springs, put you into motion, and very eager sometimes you are of doing what you are verily perswaded is good. But, even when the thing it self is commendable, the Intention and Motive Men go upon, ought to be nicely considered. For it makes a mighty Difference, whether I, or Themselves, be principally in their Thoughts. Now this discovery is not hard to make. For, if my Honour be their great Concern; howsoever my Providence disposes their Affairs, they will conclude what I do best, and will be contented with it; But if under this Disguise of Holiness, there be a lurking Corruption of Private and By-respects, if Gain, makes Men frugal, or Ambition, virtuous; or the Praise of the World, charitable; or the Consideration of their own Health, temperate; these are Principles, upon which no dependence can safely be had: Their Conduct will be unequal, and vary as Events do; and every Disappointment of their Expectations will produce Trouble and Impatience.

Do not therefore be too confident of every sort of Inclination to do well, but first advise with Me, and take care to build upon a good Foundation. For Men, who act upon indirect Ends, very often repent, when it is too late; And That which at first they proposed great Satisfaction and Advantage from, proves at long run their Torment and Loss. Nay, I must give you this farther Caution yet, That even good Inclinations are not to be taken at first sight, nor rashly pursued without a diligent and prudent Observation. For it may be convenient sometimes, to put some Restraints upon the very best Intentions. They who neglect this and give free scope to their Zeal by too great Eagerness often exceed the Bounds of Moderation and Decency; sometimes give Offence to their Brethren by their extravagant Heats, and impetuous Sallies; and sometimes, upon any Resistance or Difficulty, which

obſtructs thoſe precipitate Fervours, loſe all their inward Peace, deſiſt from their good Deſigns, and fall from the Heighth of Rapture, to the Extremities of Melancholy and Deſpair. So that to make thy Zeal in Well-doing, in all Points what it ought to be, it is by no means ſufficient, that it be honeſt and well-diſpoſed, unleſs it be alſo ſober, and regular, and diſcreet.

Again, There are ſome Occaſions and Circumſtances, which render a ſort of holy Violence neceſſary, and oblige Men to act quite contrary to their Inclination. To bear no manner of Regard to Fleſh and Senſe, or what will be moſt agreeable, any farther, than may ſerve to ſet the Mind in array againſt them, and reſolutely engage in a formal War, for the reducing, or keeping them in Obedience, to the ſuperiour Faculties of the Soul. For, by thus frequently controlling, and counter-working all that Humane Nature hath a tendency to, the outward Man is by degrees qualified for Duty; and acquires a great Readineſs of doing, or ſuffering, whatever ſhall be impoſed upon it. And in theſe Exerciſes the firſt Foundations are laid, of Contentedneſs with a Little, of Satisfaction in a private and neglected State, a mean and narrow Fortune; and of Patience under any Croſſes or Calamities, without thoſe murmuring Thoughts, which are apt to beget hard and irreverent Reflections, and too often break out in wicked Complaints, and ſawcy Expoſtulations, againſt the Juſtice, and Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, of God, and Providence.

CHAP.

Chap. XIII.

The Neceſſity and Reaſonableneſs of Patience.

Diſciple.] By all the Collections I am able to make from my dear Lord's Inſtructions, and the little Experience I have of the World, Patience ſeems to me a moſt neceſſary Virtue: For the Condition of Man in this Life is ſo expoſed to Calamities and Sorrows, that, in deſpight of all his Endeavours after Peace, Troubles await him every-where, and his State is that of Warfare and continual Suffering.

Chriſt.] It is ſo, my Son; Nor is it fit, it ſhould be otherwiſe. For thoſe Men have a wrong Notion of Peace, who make it to conſiſt in freedom from Suffering; and, either having no Troubles, or being inſenſible of any. This is a State, neither attainable by a Man, nor convenient for a Chriſtian. The Peace, I would have thee aſpire after, is ſuch as conſiſts very well with Afflictions: And This is gained, when a Man hath brought himſelf to that equal Compoſure, and reſigned Temper of Soul, as firmly to perſiſt in his Duty, and to reſt ſatisfied in the Diſpenſations of God, when he thinks fit to try his Virtue, by very great and grievous Adverſities. If This appear a hard Saying, think how much harder it will be to endure the Torments of Hell, and the implacable Vengeance of an angry God. Nature, as well as Religion, teaches Men, of Two Evils to chooſe the leſs. And This is done, when they ſet themſelves ſubmiſſively to undergo Tribulation here, for the ſake of God and a good Conſcience, that they may, by ſuch patient Suffering, deliver themſelves from the dire Effects of his Wrath, and never-ceaſing Puniſhments hereafter.

Now Tribulation is a Portion diſtributed in common to all the Sons of Men; diſtributed in large Meaſures, even to thoſe Children of this Generation, which thou perhaps vainly imagineſt to be moſt exempted from it. For even the gayeſt and moſt proſperous of them all, are not without their many and ſore Evils. 'Tis true indeed, They take a great deal of Pleaſure, indulge their Inclinations without controul, and ſo their Miſery makes a leſs ſenſible Impreſſion upon their Spirits; but Miſeries they have. Or, put the very beſt of their Caſe, and ſuppoſe their Joys to be without any Interruption, their Wiſhes without any Diſappointment; Yet, even thus, how long would their Happineſs laſt? Alas! they vaniſh like a Dream, and all their Proſperity ſoon ſcatters like Smoak; Nay, not only their Enjoyments themſelves, but the very Remembrances of them, periſh in a Moment. Their Life is but a Vapour; and Death will be ſure to ſwallow up Them and their Gayeties, in ſpeedy and perpetual Oblivion.

But this is putting the Caſe more favourably than it ever happens in reality. For, even in this Life, their Plenty and Pleaſures are checquered with Misfortunes, and all their Sweets allayed with a bitter Mixture of Cares and Fears, and inward Perplexities of Heart. The very Objects, that miniſter Pleaſure, bring Pain along with them too. And this is one great Argument, how wiſe a Providence the World is governed by, that the very Inordinacy of thoſe Affections, which purſue the Pleaſures of Senſe ſo eagerly, ſhould prove a Torment to the guilty Mind, and embaſe thoſe very Pleaſures they indulge. Theſe very Pleaſures too are ſhort and fleeting, treacherous and deceitful, irregular and exorbitant, a Shame and Blemiſh to Humane Nature; And, if Men be not ſenſible of this, That Ignorance proceeds from their own Inadvertency. Their Reaſon is intoxicated with preſent

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Delights, and their Minds blinded by vicious Habits, by which they degenerate into Brutes, ſtupidly abandon themſelves to the tranſitory Pleaſures of Sin and Luſt, at the Expence of Everlaſting Pains; and conſult the preſent Gratification of a vile mortal Body, with the Ruine of a precious and immortal Soul.

Go not thou therefore after their Exceſſes, nor place thy Happineſs in ſerving, but rather in commanding, ſubduing, denying, mortifying, thy own Inclinations. *Delight thou in the Lord, and he ſhall grant thee thy Heart's deſire.* Pſal. xxxvii. For this Delight will teach thee, that the Happineſs of Man conſiſts in inward and ſpiritual Satisfactions, in the Contempt of this World and its empty Gayeties. And, the leſs Theſe are eſteemed and affected, the greater and more raviſhingly ſweet ſhall thoſe generous and noble Pleaſures prove, which reſult from the Experience of God's Favour, and the ſubſtantial Comforts of a good Conſcience.

But ſtill theſe Comforts are not to be had, without much Labour, many Conflicts, and ſharp Sufferings. For the corrupt Inclinations of Fleſh and Blood, and the confirmed Habits of Vice, create great Difficulties; and ask Time and Pains to conquer. And conquered they may be, by introducing the contrary Habits of Virtue. The Fleſh indeed will recoil, and think it ſelf ill uſed; but Reaſon and Religion will ſilence thoſe Grumblings, and reſolute Perſeverance in good Works vanquiſh all thy Reluctancies. The ſubtle old Serpent will ſeduce and importune thee, but Prayer and good Thoughts drive the evil Spirit away; and Faſting and holy Exerciſe, or conſtant lawful Buſineſs, will keep him out. For he never enters ſo eaſily, ſo ſucceſsfully, as when Idleneſs ſets open the Door, and an empty Heart makes room for his wicked Suggeſtions.

Chap. XIV.

Obedience to Superiours; enforced by Christ's Example.

Christ.] KNow, my Son, that the Man who refuſes Obedience, rejects the Grace, and excludes himſelf from the Favour, of God; And, by ſeeking his own private Advantage inordinately, breaks the Order, and obſtructs the Good of the Publick. Diſreſpect and Contumacy to Superiours, is an infallible Mark of rebellious Appetites, and Paſſions not reduced to the Governance of Reaſon and Religion. Submiſſion therefore is of great uſe, for ſubduing the Fleſh and its Luſts; and a good Preſervative againſt Temptations. For the foreign Enemy will be more ſucceſsfully oppoſed, when thy Domeſtick one is firſt vanquiſhed; and All quiet within. And Man himſelf is his own worſt Enemy. Nor are his Circumſtances ever more full of Danger, than, when the ſenſitive raiſes Inſurrections, and would dethrone the rational Soul. And, in order to this bringing the Inferiour Faculties to Reaſon, an humble Opinion of your ſelf is neceſſary; For Partiality and Pride are at the bottom of all the Diſorders in thy own Breaſt, and all the Diſturbance given by unruly Men to Society, and good Government, of all kinds.

And what ſuch mighty Merit is there in this Submiſſion? What Diſparagement can it be thought to Thee, who art Duſt and Vileneſs, when thou remembreſt, That I my ſelf, the Almighty Majeſty of Heaven, and the Lord of all the Univerſe; I, who created Thee, and the whole World, out of Nothing, did yet condeſcend to a State of Subjection, and appeared in the very loweſt, moſt ſervile, and deſpicable Form, for thy ſake, who art nothing? And why, but that ſo

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thy Pride might have no Pretence to ſupport it, after ſo eminent a Pattern of Humility? Learn then, thou Wretch, to humble thy ſelf, and, like that Earth of which thou art, be even content to be trampled upon, and troden under Foot; Lay thy ſelf, like the Streets, to the Feet of inſulting Men who walk over thee, and never reſt, till thou haſt broken thy own Perverſeneſs, and art in a conſtant Readineſs to comply with every juſt Command of All who have Authority over thee.

Till this be done, purſue thy Paſſions with remorſeleſs Indignation; and ſpare them not, till the very laſt Remains of Pride be abſolutely ſuppreſſed and killed in thy Heart. And, if thou ſometimes find ill Uſage and tyrannical Barbarity, yet ſtill conſider, thou art but a Man, and oughtſt not to complain; Nay, rather conſider, that thou art a Sinner; in Juſtice conſigned over to Hell and eternal Fire; and let the Anger of an offended God, which ſtrictly is thy Portion and Deſert, check thy Reſentments of the Inſolence and Injuries, the reproachful Treatment, and unjuſtifiable Hardſhips, which Men may ſometimes offer to thee. This Wrath of God thou hadſt provoked, but I in Mercy ſpared thee; I had Compaſſion on thy Soul, and ranſomed it from Death by my own Blood. And canſt thou think, that no Return is due for ſuch Mercy? Yes, Know, that I require thou ſhouldſt be ſenſible of the aſtoniſhing Greatneſs of my Love, and ſhew that Senſe by Gratitude and Humility; by a modeſt and reſpectful Obſervance of my Repreſentatives here below; and by not diſdaining to ſuffer any Shame and Contempt, any Injuſtice and Barbarity, when Providence and Duty call thee to it, which I, thy Maſter, thy God, did not grudge to undergo for thy ſake, whilſt converſing in Humane Fleſh upon Earth.

Chap. XV.

God's Judgments are to be conſidered, for our Humiliation.

Diſciple.] When thou, Lord, uttereſt thy Voice in Judgments, my Joynts are looſed my Limbs quake for fear, my very Soul is confounded, and trembles at thy Thunder. In the midſt of theſe Horrours I begin to reflect, that *the Heavens themſelves are not pure in thy ſight*, and that even the *Angels* thou *haſt charged with Folly*: If then thoſe exalted intellectual Spirits were not able to ſtand before thee, and kept not their firſt Eſtate, What muſt become of ſuch a Wretch as I am? If even the Stars fell from the Firmament, how can Duſt and Aſhes hope to eſcape? They who did eat Angels Food, degenerated from their primitive Excellence, and fed on Husks with Swine, how then ſhould a Creature preſerve its Innocence, whoſe very Original is Impure? Job xxv.

This, Lord, convinces me, that there is no Holineſs, but what is derived from Thee alone; No Wiſdom without thy Governance; No Strength a ſufficient Defence if thou withdraw thy gracious Protection; No Continence or Abſtemiouſneſs effectual, except thou guard it; No Watchfulneſs againſt the Enemy, unleſs thy wakeful Eyes keep all our Approaches, and repulſe the Aſſaults of the Tempter. If thou ceaſe to ſupport us with thy mighty Hand, the Waves ſwallow us up; we ſink and periſh without thee, and with thee walk upon the Sea in ſafety: Weak and unſtable are our Reſolutions, but thy Grace gives Strength and Perſeverance; Cold and timorous are our Hearts, but thou warmeſt them with Zeal, and inſpireſt them with Courage; *Lift up then, Lord, our Hands that hang down,*

down, and our feeble Knees, that we faint not in this Spiritual Warfare, and enable thoſe who can do nothing without thee, to conquer all Difficulties through thy Strength.

I know, O Lord, that if any good thing ſeem to be in me, yet even this deſerves my meaneſt Opinion, and will in no Degree juſtifie my thinking otherwiſe of my ſelf than as a moſt vile and worthleſs Wretch. And therefore, when thy angry Juſtice afflicts me, it is my Duty, with the profoundeſt Humility, to lay my Mouth in the Duſt, and meekly ſubmit to thy correcting Hand. For, though I cannot diſcover all the Reaſons of thy myſterious Judgments, yet this I find no difficulty to diſcern, that I my ſelf am nothing, and that I proceeded out of nothing. Oh the dark Abyſs; in which I can find nothing relating to my ſelf but Vanity and Nothing. Where then is the Preſumption, where the Pride, the lofty Conceit of my Worth and Virtue? Whither are all my vain Confidences, and towring Imaginations fled? Thy Judgments, Lord, have ſwept them away like a Torrent; and all are ſunk in thoſe unſearchable Depths. Theſe ſhew me to my ſelf and juſtifie the Prophets Rebuke, *Shall the Clay exalt it ſelf againſt the Potter, that faſhioned it? Behold, as the Clay is in the Hands of the Potter, ſo is every mortal Man in thy Hand, O Lord.* Iſai. xiv. Jer. xviii.

And is it poſſible for that Soul to ſwell with Inſolence and vain Conceit, which is duly ſenſible of thy Majeſty, and ſubmits to it, with that Lowlineſs and reſigned Submiſſion which thy Truth directs? No, no, Not all the Voices of Mankind conſpiring unanimouſly in his Praiſe, can blow him up to fond Conceits of his own Excellence, when once his Hopes and Heart are fixed on God. For he conſiders, that all theſe are but ſo many Copies of himſelf; frail and feeble, deceivable and periſhing, emptineſs and nothing.

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That They, as well as their Words, are only Air and Sound, and both will quickly vaniſh together; but God and his Truth remain for evermore.

Iſai. xi. *Ceaſe therefore from Man*, for *wherein is he to be accounted of?* and endeavour to have Praiſe of Him,

1 Pet. iv. *who reſiſteth the Proud*, but in his own due time *exalteth Them, who humble themſelves under his mighty Hand.*

CHAP. XVI.

With what Reſerves we ought to Pray.

Chriſt.] LEt this, my Son, be the Language and Style of all thy Prayers: *Lord, if it be thy Pleaſure, grant me this Requeſt; If what I ask conduce to thy Glory, do thou be pleaſed to give and proſper it; Lord, if Thou, to whom all Things and their Conſequences are perfectly known, ſeeſt that this will be for my true Advantage, not only beſtow it, but with it Grace to uſe it to thy Glory: But if thou ſeeſt it may prove hurtful to me, do not only deny my Petitions, which proceed from Ignorance and Miſtake; but remove far from me the very Deſire of that, which cannot be obtained without my Prejudice.*

This laſt is a very reaſonable and expedient Requeſt; becauſe many Deſires, which ſeem, not innocent only, but even virtuous and wiſe, profitable and praiſe-worthy, in a Man's own Eyes, are yet neither inſpired by God, nor agreeable to his Will: Nor is it eaſie to diſcern, whether one be acted by a good or evil Spirit; or whether, in the Matter of his Prayers his own Inclination and private Reſpects do not determine him. And many a one, who hath fancied the Impulſe of Divine Grace, and perſwaded himſelf, that he hath been directed and acted by it all along;

long; finds the Deluſion out at laſt; and what he imputed to the Spirit of God, proves in the End a Suggeſtion of the Devil, or the eager Longings of his own vain Mind.

The ſureſt way then never to offend God in thy Deſires, and to be accepted in thy Addreſſes to him, will be, to temper all thy Inclinations with His Fear, and not ſo much as indulge a ſecret Wiſh, without ſuch Reſervations as may teſtifie an entire Submiſſion to the Divine Diſpoſal. And, when thoſe Wiſhes break out into Words, Men ſhall do well to conceive and preſent them in ſuch Forms, as may expreſs ſome Check upon themſelves, and mighty Caution in reſtraining their Tongues from asking any thing in a Peremptory Manner; but leaving the Matter entirely to God's better Choice. As thus; "*Lord, thou knoweſt, whether* "*the having, or the being denied the Matter of my Petition,* "*be moſt convenient; and therefore all I beg is, that what* "*thou ſeeſt moſt expedient may be done. I ask* indeed, as "is my Duty, but I preſume not to preſcribe to thy "Heavenly Wiſdom: Give therefore, Lord, ſuch "Things, and in ſuch Meaſures, and at ſuch Times, as "thou ſeeſt fit. Deal with me as thou knoweſt is "neceſſary. For That I am well aſſured is beſt for "Me, which is moſt agreeable to thy Will, and moſt "conducive to thy Glory. Appoint me any Poſt, "and uſe me as thy own; turn and change Me and my "Fortune at pleaſure; I only beg to be qualified for thy "Diſpenſations, to uſe them rightly, and greatly to "improve under them. For I am thy Servant, de-"voted to thee without the leaſt Reſerve: I deſire "not to live to my ſelf but to Thee; Oh that I might "be enabled faithfully and worthily to perform that "Homage and Duty, to all which my Heart is moſt "freely and ſincerely diſpoſed!

Chap.

Chap. XVII.

A Prayer for Grace to do the Will of God.

Diſciple.] "HEar me moſt merciful Saviour, I humbly beſeech thee, and let thy "Grace be ever preſent with thy weak unworthy Servant. I am not of my ſelf able to do, or think any "thing that is good: O! let thy Spirit aſſiſt my poor "Endeavours, vanquiſh the Temptations that ſo thick "beſet me, fix my inconſtant Mind, and follow me all "the Days of my Life, that I may perſevere in good "Works unto the End. Regulate my Affections and "Deſires, and confine them to ſuch Objects only, as "are well-pleaſing in thy ſight. Let thy Will be the "Guide and Meaſure of mine, and let mine ſteadily "conform to thy Pleaſure. Remove far from me all "Inclinations and Averſions, but ſuch as agree with "thoſe of the Bleſſed Jeſus. Help me to dye daily to "the World, and the things of the World, and "mortifie my Vanity to that degree, that even Shame "and Contempt, for thy ſake, may be, not only ſupportable but welcome to me. Let all my Hopes "and Wiſhes center in Thee alone; and nothing appear deſirable, in compariſon of a pure Heart and a "peaceful Conſcience. For Thou, O Lord, art my "Peace, Thou my only Reſt; in Thee alone is Pleaſure "and true Satisfaction, and all without thee is Miſery "and Torment. Oh! grant me this bleſt Retreat, "this happy Security; that I may abandon all the falſe "Appearances of Happineſs here below, and find ſoft "Eaſe and ſweet Repoſe in thy Love and Favour, "Thou True, Thou Chief, Thou Eternal Good of Pious Souls.

Chap.

Chap. XVIII.

God is our only Comfort in Trouble.

Disciple.] Whatever Comforts and Happiness I propose, This is not the Time, and Place of enjoying them, but I expect that blessed Fruition in another State. For, what would it avail, could I attain the utmost Delights the World can afford, when a very short space must of necessity put a Period to them? Do not then mistake thy Happiness, my Soul, for these things are not, cannot be, thy Rest: The Fulness of Joy and undisturbed Pleasure is no where to be found, save in God only; He is the Comforter of the Afflicted, He the Wealth of the Poor, He the Support and Strength of the Weak, He the Glory and great Reward of the Humble.

Nor let it disturb thy Peace, or discourage thy Hope, that thou canst not yet aspire to thy promised Felicity; for God is faithful and cannot lie: Only wait his own Time patiently, and thou shalt not fail of his Mercy, and an abundant Recompence of thy Faith and patient Trust in due Season. But, if this Delay draw off thy Affections to present Comforts, and abate thy Zeal for future and distant Rewards, thou shalt desire earthly Blessings and not be filled; and at the same time lose those heavenly and eternal Joys, which alone can satisfie, and make thee happy. *Use* then these Temporal things, but *love* none but the things that are Eternal. The present were not designed for Enjoyment, but for Necessity and Convenience. Thy Nature is not cut out for them, nor is it in their Power to make thee perfect, though all, this mortal State is capable of, were united together for that purpose. For God alone is a Good, large enough to fill the Desires of an immortal Soul; He only is proportioned to thy

thy Wants and noble Faculties: And the Happineſs to be met with in Him, is not that tranſitory, imperfect Thing, which the Children of this Generation fondly covet and admire, but that exquiſite, that infinite and inward Delight, of which the Pure in Heart, and Spiritual Perſons, receive ſome ſweet Foretaſts, and Pledges; by having their Converſation in Heaven, while they themſelves are upon Earth. For Man is vain, and all his Comforts like him; Empty and unſatisfactory, falſe and fleeting, ſwift in decay, and of ſhort continuance; But Thoſe from God reſemble the Perfections of their Author, ſpiritual and true, immutable and eternal. A truly pious Soul can never be deſtitute, becauſe he conſtantly bears his Happineſs about him; even the Bleſſed Jeſus, the Divine Comforter; and, when bereft of all beſides, can thus converſe with Him in the profoundeſt Solitude.

Bleſſed be thy Mercy, O Deareſt Jeſus! Bleſſed be thy cheering Preſence! O let me never be deprived of this ineſtimable Bliſs; While I have this Conſolation within, I feel no want of earthly Enjoyments: For this ſupplies, exceeds them all. Oh! let me thankfully rejoyce in thy Favour and the Light of thy Countenance lifted up upon me! Or, if at any time thou withdraw thoſe bright Beams, and interpoſe a Cloud of Sorrow, yet even then preſerve me from ſad Diſtruſt, and let the Conſideration of thy Will, which is always beſt, be my Support in my blackeſt and moſt melancholy Circumſtances. Let me not caſt away my Hope and Confidence, becauſe thou hideſt thy Face for a Seaſon; but help me to diſcern the great Wiſdom and Benefit of ſuch trying Diſpenſations, and to ſupport my Faith with the Proſpect of that Reward, which is laid up in Heaven for thoſe, upon whom Patience hath its perfect Work. For thou, O Lord, art gracious and merciful, and though we perpetually offend and provoke thee, yet wilt *thou not always*

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ways be chiding, nor keep thy anger for ever; but wilt turn again and in much Compaſſion quicken thy ſuffering Servants, that they may rejoyce in thee, and triumph over their Calamities.

Chap. XIX.

Of Caſting our Care upon God.

Chriſt.] My Son, be content, that I ſhould diſpoſe of Thee and all thy Affairs, as my Divine Wiſdom ſees fit; for I beſt know what is convenient for thee. Thou judgeſt raſhly, and art liable to Humane Frailties. Senſe and preſent Satisfactions blind thy Eyes, and byaſs thy Reaſon; but Chriſtians, who ſhould walk by Faith, and not by Sight, muſt not be governed by the ſame Meaſures which common Men make uſe of in diſtinguiſhing Good and Evil Accidents.

Diſciple.] Lord, I acknowledge my Infirmity; and am ſenſible, that thy Care and Concern for me is more prudent, more tender, than that I have for my own ſelf. And He hath made but ſmall Progreſs in the School of Chriſt, whoſe weak Faith is ſtill to learn that Leſſon, of being ſatisfied with all thy Diſpenſations, and caſting his Care upon Thee. All therefore that I beg, is the eſtabliſhing my Heart in the Way of thy Commandments; and, ſo long as I ſwerve not from Truth and Righteouſneſs, ſecure my Soul, and, for the reſt, do thy Pleaſure: For thou art Wiſe, and Juſt, and Good; and ſuch, I am ſure, are all the Methods of thy Providence; though Humane Underſtandings may not diſtinctly perceive, nor be able to account for the Reaſons of them. If therefore thou condemn me to Darkneſs and Affliction, I will praiſe and

thank thee for thy deſerved Correction even in the midſt of my Trouble; Or, if thou ſpare the Rod, and make my Darkneſs to be Light, I will then thankfully receive the Bleſſing, and magnifie the Favour which I cannot deſerve.

Chriſt.] This is indeed, my Son, the Diſpoſition and Deportment befitting the Character of my faithful Children: And all who profeſs to walk with me in Piety and Virtue, muſt bring themſelves to a Soul ſo even, ſo reſigned, that Suffering and Joy, Poverty or Riches, may be entertained alike. The One, without Murmuring or Complaint, the Other without the leaſt Pride or Change of Temper. For both are equally the Appointment of My Providence, and, as ſuch, ſhould be met, with Cheerfulneſs and perfect Content.

Diſciple.] Lord, I am willing to endure, whatever thou art pleaſed to lay upon me. And do deſire to receive Good and Evil, the Sweets and Bitter, the Comforts and the Croſſes of this Life, with the very ſame Reſentments of Mind. Nay, not only to receive, but to be thankful for both, ſince both come from thy own Hand, which cannot err in ordaining all my Events. This only I implore, that, in all Changes of Condition, thou wouldeſt in thy Mercy preſerve me from Sin; For, while I keep my Innocence, and continue in thy Love, not Calamity, nor Death, nor Hell it ſelf ſhall make me afraid. However thou may'ſt exerciſe my Patience, or frown upon me at preſent, yet ſo long as thou doſt not caſt me off for ever, nor blot my Name out of thy Book of Life, I am above all Danger, and the utmoſt Powers and Malice of Fortune, and Enemies, and Devils combined together, can never hurt me.

CHAP.

Chap. XX.

Christ our Pattern of Patience in Afflictions.

Christ.] My Son, remember I came down from Heaven for thy Salvation; I bore the Puniſhment due to Thee, and all the Miſeries to which Humane Nature is expoſed. I bore them not by Conſtraint, but Choice; and urged by no Neceſſity, but that which powerful Love impoſed upon me. And One great End, for wich I condeſcended to do ſo, was to teach thee Patience by this Example; and that my willing Sufferings might diſpoſe thee to ſubmit to the neceſſary Incumbrances of thy preſent Condition, without Reluctance and Murmuring. Sorrow became familiar to me; My conſtant attendance from the Manger to the Croſs; For every Hour produced ſome freſh Inſtance of it. My Circumſtances were low, and I contented my ſelf with the want of even the Neceſſaries of Life; My Innocence was ſlandered, and daily Complaints and Reproaches were ſounding in my Ears; Shame and Contempt I entertained without Return or angry Reſentment; my good Deeds were repaid with Malice and Ingratitude, my Miracles blaſphemed, and my Doctrine traduced and vilely miſrepreſented.

Diſciple.] Yes, Lord, I read the Story of thy invincible Meekneſs, with wonder and aſtoniſhment; and cannot but infer from thence, that, ſince thou wert pleaſed to give ſuch amazing Proofs of an entire Obedience to thy heavenly Father's Will; I, who am a wretched Sinner, and not only Subject to theſe Miſeries by the Condition of my Nature, but one who have deſerved them as Chaſtiſements for my Tranſgreſſions, am much more obliged, with a moſt perfect Submiſſion, to receive whatever thy Providence thinks fit to inflict; and muſt by no means grumble at the

Weight, or the Continuance, of any Burden thou ſhalt lay upon me in the preſent World. If any thing here ſeem heavy, yet it is rendred much eaſier and more ſupportable, by the Aſſiſtance of thy Grace, by the Contemplation of thy Example, and by the many Patterns of Conſtancy and Virtue, which thy now glorious Saints, but once afflicted Servants, who travelled the ſame rugged Journy of Life, have in all Ages ſet for my Imitation and Encouragement. I plainly ſee under this Goſpel-ſtate, a mighty Support, which even thy own peculiar People wanted under the old Law. For then the Way to Heaven was dark, and the Proſpect at their Journy's end leſs glorious and inviting. Few then applied themſelves with Zeal to ſeek a future and ſpiritual Kingdom; nor could they do ſo with equal Encouragement, till thy meritorious Death had opened an Entrance into the High and Holy Place. But, How contentedly, how thankfully, ought I to tread in thy bleſſed Steps, ſuſtained by the Aſſurance of Eternal Rewards, and directed in the right Way by the Light of thy Doctrine? For thou

John xiv. *art the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; Thy Afflictions have taught Me and all Believers, that Tribulation is the Paſſage to thy Heavenly Kingdom, and that the proper Method of attaining thy Crown, is being made a Partaker of thy Croſs. Hadſt thou not gone before us, who would have the Heart to follow? who could perſevere in a Courſe of Suffering? Nay, though thou haſt thus ſhewed us the Way, yet how loath, how backward are we to follow ſtill? And, if neither thy Miracles, nor thy Precepts, thy wondrous Humiliation, nor thy glorious Exaltations can warm us into greater Zeal and Reſolution, than by lamentable Experience we daily ſee and feel they do; How wretchedly ſlothful, alas! how cold, and motionleſs ſhould we have ſtood, had not thy Grace and marvelous Condeſcenſion vouchſafed to grant us the Advantage

tage of ſo clear a Light, and the powerful Motive of ſo bright an Example?

Chap. XXI.

Of bearing Injuries; and how we may judge of true Patience.

Chriſt.] Ceaſe thy Complaints, my Son, and, when Afflictions threaten or attack thee, call to remembrance, what I endured for thy ſake: Nay, not what I endured for thine only, but what ſo many brave and generous Saints have ſince couragiouſly endured for mine. Alas! thy Tryals yet are ſmall, nor haſt thou reſiſted unto Blood, as I and They have done. Their Difficulties were greater, their Temptations ſharper, their Sorrows more piercing, their Exerciſes more ſevere, and yet in all theſe They were more than Conquerours. It will therefore be of great Service to the confirming thy Hope and Patience, if thou diligently compare thy very light, with their much heavier, Burden; and reproach thy ſelf for ſinking under a Weight, which they would ſcarce have felt. But, if thy own Load ſeem ſo inſupportable, and thou canſt hardly be brought to think the Caſe of others ſo much more deplorable, Conſider, whether this falſe Eſtimate do not proceed from partial Affection, Tenderneſs to thy ſelf, and a fretful Impatience, rather than from the true Nature and Reaſon of the Thing. For Theſe corrupt Mens Judgments, and make them ſee their own and other Peoples Circumſtances with very different Eyes. But be thy Ideas true or miſtaken, yet ſtill the greater and the leſs Calamities call equally for Submiſſion and Conſtancy. And it is not the Degree or Meaſure, but the Author and the Conſequence

of Suffering, which is the proper Motive to Patience.

Now the better thou art compoſed under any Trouble, the more commendable is thy Wiſdom, and the larger will be thy Recompence. Nay, not only ſo, but the eaſier will be thy Lot too. For Conſideration will reconcile thee to it, and Time and Experience make the thing familiar. Nor matters it much, who are the immediate Inſtruments, or from what next Hand thy Afflictions come. For thoſe are very idle Pretences, which Men uſually labour to cover their want of Temper withal: "Had this been done by an Enemy "or a Stranger, I could have born it; but from a "Friend, a Relation, One whom I have highly obliged, "and have a Right to expect better Uſage from, what "Fleſh can brook ſuch Baſeneſs and Ingratitude? Had "I given any juſt Occaſion for that diſparaging Report, "it would never have vexed me, but to be ſlandered "and abuſed, without any Ground, without the leaſt "Fault or Provocation of mine, methinks 'tis very "hard; The thing it ſelf I could away with, but the "Perſon, or the particular Circumſtances put me out "of all Patience. Alas! Theſe are nice and frivolous Diſtinctions; Such as are altogether forreign and impertinent to the Matter in Hand; and what the Virtue of Patience is no way concerned in. For this takes Injuries and Affronts by the Great, without entring into any particular Examination of their Nature, and Quality, and peculiar Aggravations; nor does it at all regard the Perſon, by whom it is exerciſed, but conſiders that Perſon only, by whom it is to be crowned.

No Man hath yet arrived to a due Perfection in this Grace, who is not content with any kind of Tryal, from any Hand whatſoever. The Differences of Friend or Foe, of Superiour, Inferiour, or Equal; of a good-natured and conſcientious, or a wicked, perverſe, vexatious Man, are of no conſideration at all; But, let the

the Provocation be what it will, and come from whom it will, let it be offered but once, or repeated never ſo often, 'tis all alike; becauſe in All the over-ruling Hand of God is attended to; and every thing received, as ordained and originally inflicted by him: and what proceeds from Him is always good, and ſure to turn to account. And, as nothing he appoints, though ſeemingly never ſo grevious, ſhall be to good Mens Diſadvantage; ſo nothing, though never ſo ſlight and deſpicable in it ſelf, when dutifully and deſcently entertained, ſhall be paſſed over unrewarded. Arm thy ſelf therefore for Combat, and decline no occaſion of Engaging that offers, if thou deſire the Glory of the Conqueſt. Without Fighting thy Way through, there is no coming at the Crown. And they who refuſe to Suffer with Chriſt, do in effect, and by neceſſary conſequence, refuſe to Reign with him. Stand up then bravely to Afflictions, and quit thy ſelf like a Man; Repoſe and Happineſs is what thou coveteſt; but theſe are only to be obtained by Labour: Victory and Triumph are the things thou aimeſt at; But who was ever yet ſo abſurd, as to think of Triumphs without Enemies and Hardſhips, or of Conquering without a Battel?

Diſciple.] I acquieſce, dear Lord, in all thou ſayeſt; nor will I indulge ſuch vain Imaginations. But ſince, even where the Spirit is moſt willing, the Fleſh is miſerable weak, aſſiſt me, I beſeech thee, that by thy Power and Strength I may be able to do, what by my own I cannot accompliſh, and Nature is averſe from ſo much as attempting. Thou knoweſt full well, how little I can bear; how every Shock makes my feeble Heart give ground; Lord, do thou ſo ſupport and confirm me, that Tribulation may appear, not only tolerable, but even deſirable, in compliance with thy Will and my Duty. For, what Regret ſoever Humanity may betray in theſe Caſes, when Dangers

approaches; In my own better Judgment, which conſiders Things in the Chriſtian and Spiritual Senſe, I am abundantly ſatisfied, how much the harſher Diſpenſations of thy Providence conduce to my Soul's Advantage. And, though *no Chaſtiſement for the preſent ſeem joyous but grievous*, yet my better Senſe, when I think freely, convinces me of thy Wiſdom and Mercy, and that it is *even good for me to be afflicted.*

Chap. XXII.

The Infirmities and Miſeries of our preſent State.

Diſciple.] I *Will Confeſs my Unrighteouſneſs unto the Lord*, and Bewail my Infirmities before him. For every trivial Accident caſts me down, and I am often overwhelmed with Sorrow, upon Occaſions, which my calmer Thoughts abundantly convince me, deſerve rather my Contempt, than my ſerious Concern. Sometimes I ſee and condemn my own Folly, and mighty Reſolutions I make, how bravely I will behave my ſelf for the Time to come; and, yet upon the next Aſſault of ſome ſlight Misfortune, this imaginary Heroe is beaten from his Poſt, and cannot ſtand the Shock of a very common Difficulty. The pooreſt and moſt deſpicable Things are, I find, capable of becoming great and dangerous Temptations; And I, who at a diſtance deſie them, yet, when brought to the Tryal, feel, by ſad Experience, upon how ſlippery Ground I ſtand.

Pſal. xxxii.

This is indeed the wretched Condition of thy poor unſtable Servant: But, Lord, do Thou, in much Compaſſion, look upon my Frailty, for thou knoweſt it more perfectly than I my ſelf can. Stretch forth thy Hand and draw me out of theſe deep

Pſal. lxix.

deep Waters, and out of this Mire of Sin and Weakneſs, that I ſink not in my Corruption. I cannot eaſily expreſs the melancholy Reflections, the Shame and Confuſion, the Indignation and ſad Perplexity of Heart, which the Conſciouſneſs of my own Inablility to reſiſt Temptations, and the Inconſtancy of my beſt and moſt vigorous Purpoſes create; and, though my Will be not always vanquiſhed, nor do I (bleſſed be God) yield to every wicked Suggeſtion, yet the repeated Aſſaults of the Enemy diſturb my Quiet, and I am weary of a Life, which conſiſts of perpetual Hazard, and painful Conflicts with my ſelf. The Wretchedneſs of my Condition is but too manifeſt: I need no other Argument to prove it, than that eaſie Acceſs evil Thoughts find to my Breaſt; which, in deſpight of all my watchful Care, and moſt manful Struggles, are much ſooner inſinuated, and received, than either driven out again, or prevented from entring.

Look down then, thou Almighty Rock of *Iſrael*, and Lover of Souls, and interpoſe thy Power and Protection; Give ſeaſonable Succour, and happy Succeſs to my too fruitleſs Endeavours. Arm and guard me with Strength from above; and ſuffer not the Old Man, the corrupt Inclinations of my Fleſh, which refuſes to be entirely ſubdued and brought to Reaſon, to uſurp the Dominion over my better Part. For this obſtinate Rebel renews its Inſurrections daily, and bids me Battel; calls me to Combats and hazardous Engagements, which muſt never, never end in perfect Peace and Safety, ſo long as this miſerable State of Mortality endures. Moſt miſerable indeed; ſince every Action and Accident of my Life involves me in freſh Dangers; ſince every Step I take is upon Snares and Precipices; ſince every Time and Place is thick beſet, with Troubles and Toils, with Treachery and Temptation, and a numerous Hoſt of Enemies ready to

to devour and ſwallow me up. For a fatal uninterrupted Succeſſion of Tryals are every Moment renewing their Attacks, and when I have happily vanquiſhed many, and fondly promiſe my ſelf a Truce; as many more immediately draw down upon me, and make fiercer and more furious Attempts upon ſome other Quarter, which, I hoped, had been ſufficiently covered from their Approaches.

And can a Life, ſubject to ſuch Surprizes and Hazards, embittered with ſo many Troubles and ſevere Tryals, encumbred with ſo much Frailty and Corruption, be valued and mightily coveted? Nay, can That deſerve the very Name of Life, which naturally breeds Plagues and Diſeaſes, and expoſes us to ſuch variety of Deaths? Yet ſtupid Man hugs, and embraces, and eſteems it his only Happineſs; expects Eaſe in the midſt of Diſtraction, purſues Joys in a Valley of Tears, and vainly ſets up for the boaſted Perfection of Pleaſure, in a Condition of inevitable Miſery, and lingring, certain, Pain. Sometimes indeed the tender Senſe of ſome Affliction cuts us to the quick; and, in our melancholy Moods, we give the World hard Words; call it *Deceitful*, *Treacherous*, and *Vain*; but even They, who rail at it moſt liberally, and profeſs to hate and deſpiſe it, cannot be prevailed with to be content to leave it. The Fleſh and its Affections have ſtill a powerful Influence, and ſpur Men on to the Purſuit and Love of thoſe very Enjoyments, which, Reaſon and their own Experience have taught them, cannot be worth their Pains, nor in any degree anſwer their deluded Expectations. For we muſt obſerve, that our Love and Hatred of this World proceed from very different Cauſes and Principles. *The Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*, engage our Affections; and Theſe are ever preſent, and ever vehement with us. The Calamities, and Griefs, and Pains we feel, pro-

1 John iii.

provoke our Hatred and Contempt, and repreſent Life a Burden and Miſery; and theſe have their Intervals, and work upon us feebly and by Fits. The Former too ſtrike in with Inclination, and are aſſiſted by Nature; the Latter have no influence upon us, but what their own Weight gives; All their Impreſſions are forcible and violent, heavy and painful, and ſuch as we ſubmit to, only becauſe we cannot help it.

Thus Senſe and ſinful Pleaſure get within us, and, which is very lamentable, debauch our Reaſon. The preſent Ticklings of the Body cheat the Mind, and vitiate our Palates to that degree, that, being prepoſſeſs'd with a falſe Taſt of worldly Sweets, we have no Reliſh left for that delicious Entertainment, with which God and Religion feed and feaſt the pure and heavenly-minded Soul. For, Oh! Thoſe happy Men, who have learnt to deſpiſe and abandon earthly Things, and conſecrated themſelves entirely to God, by Mortification, Self-denial, and a ſteady Courſe of ſevere Virtue; theſe exalted Spirits know and feel the Truth of God and his Promiſes; They find unſpeakable Charms and ſenſible Delights in the voluntary Refuſal of thoſe Toys and Baits, which cannot be had with Satisfaction, nor coveted with Safety. They ſee, and deſpiſe, and pity the Folly of abuſed Mankind, diſcover the lurking Frauds of the Tempter; and, that the imagined Happineſs and boaſted Pleaſures of ſenſual and earthly Men, are only Snares and Dangers, Vanity and Cheat.

Chap. XXIII.

Of Placing all our Hope and Happineſs in GOD.

Diſciple.] REpoſe thy ſelf, my Soul, in God, upon all Occaſions; and above all other Dependences; for He is the only ſure Refuge, the eternal Reſt of the Saints. Grant me thy Grace, O ſweeteſt, kindeſt Saviour, to value, and love, and truſt in Thee above all things. Make me to prize thee far before Health and Beauty, to deſire thee more than Honour and Advancement, more than Riches and Power, more than Wit and Learning; To rejoyce in thee more than in Pleaſure and Proſperity, more than in Reputation and Praiſe, more than in the largeſt Promiſes, the higheſt Deſerts, the moſt exalted Gifts, the moſt tranſporting Joys, which thou canſt impart, or my Heart, when moſt enlarged, is able to receive. Let me admire thee above Angels and Arch-angels, and all the Hoſt of Heaven; above all Things viſible and inviſible, more than all that is, or can be, which is not thy own ſelf.

For Thou, my God, art the beſt and moſt excellent Being; In Thee alone is Plenty and Fulneſs, ſweet Refreſhment, peaceful Comfort, and raviſhing Delights; the Perfection of Beauty and charming Graces; true Honour and adorable Greatneſs: In Thee, as in its proper Center, all Good meets, and dwells, and hath, and doth, and will continue to abide, from and to all Eternity. Give then thy ſelf, my deareſt Jeſus, for all thou giveſt, and all thou promiſeſt to give beſides, is poor and little, when compared with the Sight and Fruition of Thee. And I have found, by long Experience, that all thy other Favours, nay, all Nature is too ſhort and narrow to ſatisfie my Soul; whoſe unbounded Deſires exalt and

ſtretch

ſtretch themſelves far beyond all preſent Enjoyments, and can be filled, can reſt contented, with nothing leſs than Thee.

O my beloved Lord, King of the Univerſe, knit me to thee with the Bands of an entire and holy Affection. Set me at liberty from this Clog of Earth, and give me Wings of ardent Zeal and pure Devotion, that I may ſoar aloft, and take my flight higher than Heaven it ſelf; and find my reſt in Thee. Oh! when will that happy Time come, when I ſhall be ſet at liberty from Sin and Corruption, from the Body and the World, and without Interruption, without Allay, taſt and feaſt upon the Sweetneſs of my God? When will the neceſſary Cares of this Life ceaſe to diſtract me, and leave me Power and Leiſure to indulge thoſe Longings and Pleaſures, which refined and unbodied Spirits feel, when ſwallowed up in the Contemplation of thy Divine Excellencies; and even raiſed above themſelves, they know, and love, and retire wholly into Thee? At preſent I am oppreſſed with a Load of Infirmities and Corruptions, and often groan under the Senſe of my heavy Burden. The inward Joys, with which thy Grace ſupports me, are mingled and embaſed with Pains and Tears; which cloud, and darken, and deject my Mind; diſtract my Thoughts, obſtruct my eagereſt Wiſhes and Endeavours, and faſten me down to Earth and Miſery, when I would fly to thy Embraces. I cannot, in this Vale of Sorrow, enjoy my Lord, my Love; but wait with hope, and long ſore for that happy Change, which ſhall tranſlate me to the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, and render me Partaker of their Bliſs. But let not, Lord, my Sufferings, and Tears, be loſt; Remember and compaſſionate my preſent Wretchedneſs, and grant my Sighs an eaſie and effectual Acceſs into thy bleſſed Preſence.

Thou,

Thou, Lord, art the Brightneſs of thy Father's Glory; dart thy reviving Beams into my Soul; enlighten its dark Places, and ſcatter its Diſcomforts: To Thee the very Thoughts and inmoſt Deſires of every Heart are known; By Thee the moſt ſecret and ſilent Wiſhes are throughly underſtood. O hear me, when I ſpeak in this Language, and pour out my Supplications in Sighs and Griefs which Words cannot utter. Even when my Tongue lies ſtill, my Thoughts are in motion; and my Heart within my Breaſt burns with inarticulate Ejaculations. "How long, (ſay I to "my ſelf) how long will my Lord, my Bridegroom, "delay his coming! O! that he would vouchſafe to "enter under the Roof of his unworthy and afflicted "Servant! O that he would ſtretch forth his Al-"mighty Hand, and deliver this Wretch, juſt ready "to ſink, out of all the Miſery and Trouble, which "ſurround, oppreſs, and are ready to devour him! "Come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly. For without thee, "no Day, no Hour is eaſie or comfortable; for thou "art my Hope, my Joy, and all my worldly Plenty; "but Without thee is the very Extremity of Poverty "and Want.

See how I lye in this Priſon of the Fleſh, fettered and bound up with the Chain of my Sin, till the Pitifulneſs of thy great Mercy looſe me, and the Light of thy Countenance, breaking into this darkſom Dungeon, aſſure me of thy Favour and Friendſhip. "Let "Others covet and ſet their Affections upon ſuch "wretched Objects, as deluded Senſe thinks valuable; "but, as for Me, I will love and long for Nothing, "but Thee, my God, alone; For Thou, my God, a-"lone, art my Hope and Happineſs; the only Stay "of my preſent, and the only Bliſs of my future "and eternal State. Such is, and ſuch ſhall ever be my Addreſs, and fervent Prayer. Nor will I let thee go, until thou bleſs me; till thou inſpire new Life with

with thy Favour; and dwell in, and converſe familiarly with my Soul, by thy Spirit and gracious Preſence.

Chriſt.] Behold me here, my Son, always attentive to thy Prayers, always ready to extend the Comfort and Relief thou ſo zealouſly imploreſt. Thy Tears and fervent Deſires, the Sorrows of thy perplexed Heart, and the ſtrong Cries of a wounded Conſcience have pierced the Skies, and brought me down to thy ſpeedy Succour and Comfort; For I am ever nigh to ſuch as be of an humble and contrite Spirit, and my Ears are always open to the Prayers of my ſuffering Servants.

Diſciple.] I did indeed preſume, in the Anguiſh of my Soul, to beg what I am ſenſible I cannot deſerve, and flee to thee, my God, for help. And lo! I am ſincerely diſpoſed to forſake all and follow thee. Nor will I aſcribe to my ſelf the Glory of ſo zealous, ſo reſigned a Temper; For Thou, Lord, didſt work this good Thing in me, and, by thy own preventing Grace, kindle and excite my very firſt Deſires. I prayed, but Thou preparedſt my Heart; I ſought thee, but it was by Thy Impulſe and Direction. And for this firſt Diſpoſition, I return thee my moſt humble and unfeigned Thanks; acknowledging it thy beſt, thy ſole Gift, that I have been able ſo much as to think or intend any good Thing. Since then the whole of what I do or deſire well is Thine, my part ſhall be to cheriſh every holy Motion, to improve the early and happy Aſſiſtances of thy Grace, to ſubmit my ſelf without any Reſerve to thy holy Guidance, and, in the midſt of the very beſt Performances thou qualifieſt me for, conſtantly and humbly to remember my own Vileneſs and Impotence. For Who, O Lord, is like unto thee? Or what in Heaven or Earth, which hath or boaſts of any Excellence, can be compared unto my God and Saviour? Thy Works are juſt and true,

true, Thy Precepts right and equitable, Thy Providence great and glorious, and all things are governed by it, after a moſt wiſe, and holy, and good, and wonderful Manner. All Honour and Glory and Praiſe, be therefore aſcribed to Thee, Eternal Wiſdom of thy Eternal Father: May Heaven, and Earth, and all the Creatures, ſet forth thy Excellencies, and in this general Conſort I will joyn; my Mouth ſhall ſing thy aſtoniſhing Works, thy great Glories; and I will never ceaſe to Praiſe and Adore my God, while I have any Being.

CHAP. XXIV.

Diſciple.] Pſal. cxix. OPen thou *the Eyes of my Underſtanding*, O Lord, *that I may ſee* and obey *the wondrous Things of thy Law*: Give me the perfect Knowledge of thy Will, and poſſeſs me with a reverent and thankful Senſe of all thy Goodneſs and Loving-kindneſs to Me and to all Men; that I may ſhew forth thy Praiſe, and publiſh thy Mercies. I know Theſe are ſo numerous and great, that I can never magnifie them worthily: The leaſt of them exceeds my Power to expreſs; and when I conſider them, I am ſo far from any vain Pretence of Merit, that all my Thoughts are overpowered, and loſt in wonder. For all our Advantages of Mind and Body, of Perſon and Fortune, thoſe which are Endowments and Ornaments of Nature, and thoſe which exalt and ſupply the Defects of Nature, all are the Effects of thy Bounty and Beneficence; *from whom every good and perfect Gift cometh.*

Jam. i. 17.

Thou art the Common Source, the Univerſal Repoſitory, from whence our Benefits are drawn down. Not to All in equal Proportions, 'tis true; but, be the

the Measure less or more, 'tis still thy Distribution. He who receives most is indebted for the whole to thy Liberality; and He who hath least, could not have had that little but from Thee. He to whom thou hast dealt thy Blessings most plentifully, is not from that Dispensation to take an Estimate of himself; His Plenty will not justifie any Confidence or Boast of his own Merit, nor may he insult over his Brethren, or behave himself uncomely, and disesteem or despise those, from whom thy Mercies have distinguished him. For the Greatness of Mens Deserts is most eminently discovered by a Modest and Mean Opinion of themselves, Courtesie and Condescension to others, Gratitude and Devotion towards God. And the more they are sensible of their own Wants and Unworthiness, the better they qualifie themselves for fresh and greater Demonstrations of thy Love and Liberality. Again, The Man, to whom thou hast distributed more sparingly, must not repine and be discouraged, nor fret and grudge the larger Portion of his wealthier Neighbour; but keep his Eyes and Mind wholly intent upon Thee, and admire the Freedom of thy Grace, which, as it cannot be obliged to any, so gives to all largely, and without partial Respect of Persons.

For thou art to be praised in all thy Gifts by every Man, because all comes from Thee: And Thou art Master of thy own Favours; Thou givest without Upbraiding, and withholdest without Injustice: Thy Wisdom knows what Measures are proper and expedient for each Person; and the Reasons, why one Man differs from another, lye not within the compass of our Knowledge, but must be left entirely to thy Judgment, to determine the Fitness of them.

In this Perswasion, Lord, I readily acknowledge and adore thy Mercy, in suffering me to want many of those Advantages, which the Generality of Mankind set a mighty Value upon. Nay, I am satisfied, that

Men ought to be afflicted, and humble their Souls, with the Conſiderations of their own Wants and Unworthineſs; yet ſo, as not only not to give way to ſad Deſpondencies and Diſtruſt of thy Mercy; but, even from this very Subject to draw Matter of Comfort and Joy; becauſe thou haſt ſo particularly declared thy Affection to the contrite and humble Souls, and given them Marks of more than ordinary Favour.

Such were thoſe Apoſtles, ſo mean in their own and the World's Eſteem, whom thou madeſt choice of for Witneſſes of thy Truth, and Attendants upon thy Perſon. Theſe very Heroes in the Chriſtian Story, whom thou haſt appointed Judges and Rulers of the whole World in Matters of Religion, were recommended to that High Promotion, by being Meek and Poor in Spirit, void of Guile, and mortified to the World; patient in Suffering, content with Inſolence, and barbarous Treatment; and proud of nothing, but being thought worthy to endure Shame and Pain for the Name of Jeſus. So diſtant from common Men, ſo ſingular were their Notions, which diſpoſed them with Joy and Eagerneſs to embrace, what others dread and deteſt, and ſhun with all their Induſtry and Might. The never-failing Spring of Joy and Comfort, which They who truly love, and fear thee, and are thankful for thy infinite Goodneſs find within; flows from the conſtant Reſignation of their Minds to thy Diſpoſals, and the Reflections upon thy wiſe eternal Purpoſes, which check their Proneneſs to Partiality and Diſcontent, and make every Diſpenſation of thy Providence welcome to them. They are abaſed with equal Satisfaction, as others are exalted: And regard not High or Low, Honourable or Deſpiſed, according to common Reputation, but conſider, that their Station and Circumſtances in the World are choſen and ordained by Thee; and cannot therefore but be good, nay, better than any other, becauſe the Effect of thy Di-

Divine Appointment, which always knows and chooſes the beſt. Could we but once arrive at this conſiderate Temper of Mind, the Different Accidents of Life would ceaſe to be either uneaſie, or extravagantly pleaſant. The violent Shocks upon our Paſſions would be effectually prevented; becauſe Thy Honour would take place above our own Appetites and miſtaken Intereſts. Poverty and Shame would be acceptable, as coming from the ſame Hand with Riches and Honour. And even thoſe things, which are moſt agreeable to the Reliſh and Inclinations of Humane Nature, would pleaſe and comfort us more, with the Conſideration of their being beſtowed by Thee, the Author of all our Happineſs; than upon the account of any Advantages to be had from the things themſelves. The Zeal for thy Honour in the extremity of Diſtreſs, ſhould ſupport good Men more, and find greater regard from them than all the Wealth or Glory, or other external Bleſſings, which thou at any time doſt or canſt confer, upon the moſt proſperous of the Sons of Men in this World. So ſmall is the Conſideration of the greateſt Gift, in compariſon of the Wiſe, the Good, the Almighty Giver, and Diſpoſer of our Fortunes; who orders all things for the beſt, and is in all our kindeſt Friend, and conſtant Benefactor.

Chap. XXV.

The Things which make for Peace.

Chriſt.] Hearken to me my Son, and I will inform thee in the right Way to true Peace and perfect Liberty.

Diſciple.] Be pleaſed, Lord, ſo to do; for ſuch Inſtruction will prove both acceptable and profitable to me.

Chriſt.] Make it thy Buſineſs, rather to comply with the Deſires and Commands of others, than to indulge thy own Inclinations. Chooſe a moderate; nay, a low Fortune, rather than Greatneſs and Abundance. Be humble, obedient, and condeſcending in all thy Deportment. Let this be thy conſtant Wiſh and Prayer, That God would perform his Pleaſure, and diſpoſe of Thee and all thy Affairs as to Him ſeems moſt convenient. The Man that hath brought himſelf to this Temper and Spirit, be aſſured, is in the ready Way to Peace of Mind and true Content.

Diſciple.] The Words my Lord hath ſpoken are few in Number, but full of Senſe, and of very comprehenſive Extent; and I can eaſily diſcern in this little Space the Grounds of great Perfection in Virtue. Did I but diligently obſerve theſe Rules, how happily would all exceſſive Concern, and violent Diſorder at any Accidents of Humane Life be ſuppreſs'd, or quite prevented? And if at any time hereafter I find my ſelf oppreſſed with immoderate Cares or Reſentments, Thy Wiſdom hath taught me to diſcover the true Cauſe of my Trouble; and, that I ſuffer for neglecting to comply with this Doctrine. But ſuch Compliance, Lord, thou knoweſt is not the Work of Nature and mere Reaſon: And therefore I implore the mighty Aſſiſtances of thy Grace, to which nothing is hard, for making thoſe Improvements, which in the preſent State of Corruption, are to Fleſh and Blood impracticable. Nothing is more acceptable in thy ſight, than the Conqueſt of our Infirmities, and bold Advances in Goodneſs; put forth thy Hand then, and what thou haſt taught me to know, enable me to perform, That I may both approve my own Obedience, and (what without thee I cannot do) ſucceſsfully purſue my own Happineſs and Salvation.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVI.

A Prayer againſt Evil Thoughts.

Diſciple.] *GO not far from me, O Lord, my God, make haſt to help me*; For corrupt Imaginations are perpetually riſing in my Breaſt, and innumerable Fears and Horrors cloſe my Soul in on every ſide. The Senſe of my hazardous Condition overwhelms me with Torment and deep Diſtreſs, while I ſee the greatneſs of my Danger, and the multitude of my Enemies, but know not how to decline the One, or to fight my Way through the Other. Pſal. lxx.

Chriſt.] Remember, Son, my Promiſe; *I will go before thee, and make the crooked Places ſtreight; I will break in pieces the Gates of Braſs, and cut in ſunder the Bars of Iron: And I will give thee the Treaſures of Darkneſs, and hidden Riches of ſecret Places.* Iſa. xlv.

Diſciple.] Lord, ſince thou haſt applied thoſe myſtical Words to my Comfort, let me, I beſeech thee, experimentally find the gracious Accompliſhment of them in my own Perſon. And ſcatter all my dark and diſmal, my vain and ſinful Thoughts, by ſhedding the Light of thy Grace abroad into my Heart. For in the extremity of Grief and Anguiſh, this is my Hope and only Support, to take ſanctuary in thy Goodneſs, to repoſe all my Confidence, and caſt the Burden of my Cares, upon thee; to pour out my whole Soul before thee, and wait with Patience thy own good Time, for ſuccouring me in, and giving me a happy Iſſue out of, all my Afflictions.

Chap. XXVII.

A Prayer for Spiritual Illumination.

Diſciple.] SHoot forth, O Bleſſed Jeſus, the bright Beams of thy Heavenly and Eternal Light, that it may enlighten all the dark Corners of my Heart, and effectually ſcatter every Cloud of Ignorance and Errour, which now hang ſo thick over me. Call home my wandring Thoughts, and repulſe the Temptations, which furiouſly aſſault me. Fight thou my Battles, and ſubdue thoſe fierce wild Beaſts, thoſe brutiſh Luſts, which range in this Deſart, and are ever ſtriving to devour me; that by thy Power the Wilderneſs may be turned into a Palace, and inſtead of the violent Cries and Howlings of raging Paſſions, no Sound may be heard there, but Songs of Praiſe.

Mark i. Thou, Lord, who commandeſt the *Winds and the Waves and they obey thee*, ſilence the Storms within my Breaſt; Say to that troubled Sea, *Be ſtill*, and immediately there ſhall be *Peace*, and a profound *Calm*. *Send out thy Light and thy Truth*, and warm this barren Soil, for ſuch am I, till Mellowed and Impregnated by the Sun of Righteouſneſs. Pour down thy Grace upon me plentifully, and Water me with thy refreſhing Moiſture, which, like ſeaſonable Showers and gentle Dew, may fatten my Soul, and enable it to bring forth generous Fruit in great Abundance. Raiſe and refine my Mind, preſt down with the Droſs of earthly Deſires; and draw my Affections up to Heaven and heavenly Objects; that the ſweet reliſh of that Bliſs above, may give me a diſguſt and loathing to all the nauſeous Pleaſures here below. Deliver, or rather ſnatch me away with a holy Violence, from all the periſhing Comforts of this Mortal State; For my Thirſt of Happineſs I find is greater,

than

than Any Creature can either quench, or in a good Degree aſſwage. Unite me to thy ſelf with inviolable Bands of holy Love, ſo ſhall my Soul be ſatisfied; For thou alone canſt anſwer all my Longings; and the whole World without thee is trifle, and emptineſs, and nothing.

Chap. XXVIII.

Againſt a buſie inquiſitive Temper.

Chriſt.] My Son, have a care of indulging a curious Humour; and do not create to thy ſelf unneceſſary Troubles, by meddling with Matters, or Perſons, which are no part of thy Concern. For what is This or That to Thee? *Follow thou me.* What have you to do with the Virtues or Vices, the Conduct or the Indiſcretions of Others: how they behave themſelves, what Company they keep, or with what Diſcourſe they entertain one another? Why all this eager and intemperate Zeal to vindicate or to accuſe them? You ſhall not anſwer for Their Miſcarriages, nor be one whit the better for Their Excellencies. Your Own Words and Actions are the only thing you will be called to account for; look well to Them, and beware leſt this buſie and malicious Impertinence do not enflame that Reckoning. Trouble not your ſelf to turn Informer, and take not upon you to be a Judge. Leave that to Me; I know every Man throughly, and nothing which is done under the Sun can eſcape my Obſervation. I am perfectly appriſed of each Perſon's Condition, ſee every Action, nay, every Intention, every Deſign, and not only what they do, but what they drive at. Theſe things are far removed out of Your Sight, and therefore you cannot judge truly, if

you might attempt it innocently. But know, once more, that Judgment is My Prerogative, and therefore it were Impudence and Uſurpation in you to attempt it, if you were qualified to judge others. Study rather to be Quiet, contain your ſelf within your own Buſineſs; and let the prying, cenſorious, the vain and intriguing World follow their own Devices; For all which they ſhall aſſuredly be one Day ſummoned to a ſevere Account; For all their Arts and ſpecious Colours cannot impoſe upon Me. Engage not with them in the ſame Deſigns, nor let the empty Phantome of a great Reputation, the Pride of numerous and honourable Relations or Acquaintance, or the particular Intimacies and Friendſhips of celebrated Perſons, engage your Time and Thoughts. Theſe only ſerve to diſtract and perplex the Mind, and cheat you at laſt with fond Expectations; they lead you into a Miſt, and there they leave you, loſt and bewildred. But I would ſhew thee the true Way, and communicate my Inſtructions freely, wert thou but at leiſure to receive my Secrets, and careful to obſerve my Motions; by opening the Door when I knock, and watching all Opportunities of entertaining me in thy Heart.

CHAP. XXIX.

Of Laſting Peace, and True Goodneſs.

Chriſt.] THis was my Promiſe to my Diſciples heretofore, *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you, not as the World giveth, give I unto you.* But, though Peace be in every Man's Wiſhes, yet the Qualifications and Prediſpoſitions, neceſſary for procuring and preſerving it, are the Care of very few. My Peace takes up its dwel-

John xiv. 27.

dwelling with the Meek and Humble. And the Peace of my Servants consists in steady Patience; in attending diligently to my Words, and following my Directions. Therefore, upon every Occasion, be sure to make a Conscience of what you Do or Say; Let the pleasing Me, be your chief, your only Concern, and the Fruition of Me your ultimate, your only End and Desire. Pass no rash Censure upon other Peoples Words or Actions, and do not affect to be a Man of Business or Secrets; for this will be the best Expedient to make your Troubles few and light. I say, *Few and Light*; for to escape Trouble altogether, and have no Affliction at all in Mind, Body, or Estate, is not consistent with the Nature of your present Condition, but one of the Privileges reserved for Heaven and Immortality.

Do not therefore imagine, that You are then in perfect Peace, when you are sensible of no Calamity or Disturbance; Or, that a present Freedom from Assaults, is an Argument that you have no Enemy, and all is safe and well with you; Nor, when things succeed according to your Heart's desire, that this is a Proof of your extraordinary Virtue and Perfection; Nor, if your Zeal and Piety be fervent, and your Contemplations full of Delight, conclude your self a particular Favourite of God. For These are forreign and deceitful Inferences: such as neither prove the Sincerity, nor the Degree and Perfection of any Man's Virtue. This is discovered by quite different Marks. The devoting and resigning your self entirely to the Will of God; not seeking your own but his Glory in every thing you do; considering all Events wisely, and receiving Prosperity and Adversity with Evenness of Temper; and such a brave unshaken Perseverance in Goodness, as, even when the Assistances and Encouragements of Grace are withdrawn for a season, can resolutely go on, and harden it self to undergo yet sharper

Tryals

Tryals with Conſtancy; Such Lowlineſs of Mind as never puffs a Man up with an Opinion of his own Merit, but in the ſoreſt Diſtreſſes can find Matter of Praiſe and Thanks, for that Mercy which even then inflicts much leſs than he deſerves to ſuffer; And a firm Hope, that God will not forſake his Servants; This is the Way of Peace, the Way that leads to ſure Conſolation, and Favour with God. And, if, to not thinking highly of your own Performances, you can add that Other Excellence of deſpiſing your Self, and abhorring your own Vileneſs, then be aſſured your Peace is built upon ſo ſolid, ſo impregnable a Foundation, that mortal Man here on Earth is not capable of attaining to it in greater Perfection.

Chap. XXX.

True Freedom of Mind.

Diſciple.] THis is indeed the utmoſt Perfection Mortality can aſpire after, to abandon all worldly Thoughts, and without interruption keep the Mind upon the Buſineſs of the Soul, and heavenly Contemplations: To paſs through a Life thick ſet with Cares and Troubles, yet free and unconcerned: Provided ſtill this Unconcernedneſs proceed not from Stupidity, heavineſs of Apprehenſion, or ſlothful Neglect, but from a generous liberty of Soul, by which the Man gets looſe from all immoderate Deſires, and too tender Love of earthly Enjoyments. This Faculty I earneſtly covet, and beg thee, O my God, to protect me againſt the Cares of the World, leſt the Neceſſities of my Body employ me too anxiouſly, and, under that Pretence, my Affections be inſnared, and ſo I entangled in Multiplicity of Buſineſs,

to

to the Prejudice and Neglect of better and weightier Concerns; Or leſt I be enticed to Sin by the Pleaſures of Senſe, or diſcouraged from the ſteady Purſuit of Virtue and Heaven, by too tender and afflicting Reſentments of any Calamities, which may happen to me.

I ſpeak not now of thoſe vain Superfluities, which the deluded World ſo vehemently contend for; but beg to be preſerved in thoſe Miſeries and Dangers. For Miſeries and Dangers I cannot but eſteem the common and unavoidable Incumbrances of Life; ſince theſe lye heavy, and cling cloſe about the Soul, and put it under ſuch a ſtrait Confinement, that it cannot freely obey the Diſpoſitions it feels within, of getting above Concern for the World, and fixing its Deſires and Endeavours upon ſpiritual Objects. Thou, O my God, art Sweetneſs inexpreſſible. But, that my Soul may truly reliſh thee, turn, I beſeech thee, all my worldly Comforts into Bitterneſs, leſt they vitiate my Palate, and give a Diſguſt to heavenly Things, by ſome deluding Charm of preſent pretended Good. Oh! let not Fleſh and Blood prevail in their Conflict with the Spirit, let not the World and its fading Glories cheat me into Ruine; let not the ſubtle Enemy of Souls ſupplant me with his tempting Wiles. Give me Courage to reſiſt, when called to the Combat; Patience to endure, when called to Suffering; Firmneſs of Mind to perſiſt immovable in my Duty, when Temptations and evil Suggeſtions labour to ſeduce me. Exchange, if it be thy Will, the tranſitory and falſe Comforts of This World, for the Oyl of true Gladneſs, the Aſſiſtances and ſweet Satisfactions of thy bleſſed Spirit; and, inſtead of carnal Love, and ſenſual Inclination, let the Love and Deſire of Thee be diffuſed through my whole Heart, and reign unrival'd there.

Even

Even Food, and Raiment, and the Neceſſaries by which Life is ſuſtained, are a Grievance and Obſtruction to zealous and refined Souls: But what muſt be a Burden, let me not make an Occaſion of Sin; by uſing thy Creatures intemperately, by a luxurious Indulgence, or inordinate Appetite. Nature, I know, it is my Duty to ſupport; and therefore, entirely to refuſe and neglect theſe Proviſions, were Sin and foul Ingratitude. But to enlarge our Deſires beyond the proper Uſes of theſe things, and let them looſe upon Superfluity and Vanity, Delicacy and Delight: This the Law of God hath moſt wiſely forbidden; becauſe it were in effect to connive at all Licentiouſneſs, by cheriſhing the Fleſh, and animating and ſupporting it in Inſolence and Rebellion againſt the Spirit. Between theſe two Extremes there lies a ſafe middle Way, in which I humbly implore the Guidance of thy Hand; leſt I decline from Virtue on either ſide, and going aſtray after my own Inclination, or unadviſed Zeal, forſake my Path, and fly out beyond the Meaſures thou haſt preſcribed for me.

Chap. XXXI.

Self-love the greateſt Obſtruction to Virtue and Happineſs.

Chriſt.] SOn, if thou aim at Purchaſing All, know, that it is not to be bought at any Price leſs than thy All. Earth muſt be bartered for Heaven, and where I give my ſelf, I expect the whole Man in exchange. Think not therefore of any private Reſerves of Intereſt or Pleaſure, in Bar to my entire Poſſeſſion; for all the World cannot do thee greater Prejudice, than ſuch Self-love. This ſticks more cloſe, while other

other things are looſe and at a diſtance, and all things faſten upon thee, only according as the Degree of your own Love and Inclination for them gives opportunity and advantage. If your Mind and its Affections be pure, and ſincere, and moderate, nothing ſhall have the power to enſlave you.

And what Pretence can you have for ſuffering them to be otherwiſe? For who would ſet his Love upon things, which cannot be obtained without Difficulty, oftentimes not with it; or, if they be, cannot be enjoyed without Danger? Who would court Bonds and Captivity, and be fond of having that, which will obſtruct his weightieſt Concern, and rob him of his Liberty? Were theſe Conſiderations duly attended to, it muſt appear prodigious Folly, for any Man not to reſign himſelf up entirely to Me; to waſt his Strength with unprofitable Vexations, and labour in the Fire for Vanity, and create Troubles which it is in his power to avoid. Obey my Will then, and ſubmit all to my Diſpoſal, and then thou art out of the Reach of the World, and its Temptations. But, if Intereſt and private Reſpects ſtill govern in thy Heart, all thy Application will be in vain. Thou runneſt away from Troubles in one place to meet them in another; Seeking Reſt but finding none, becauſe thou always carrieſt thy Torment about thee. For, even in thy moſt ſucceſsful Attempts, there will be ſomewhat wanting to give thee complete Satisfaction; and in thy moſt private Retirements thou wilt be dogged and haunted by ſome Croſſes. The World and its Advantages can do thee no Service by being enjoyed, but by being ſlighted, and deſpiſed. This is the Caſe, not of Riches only, but of Honour and Reputation too, for They alſo make themſelves Wings and fly away; and thou canſt never be ſafe or happy but by mortifying thy Ambition and Vain-glory.

How

How many People pleaſe themſelves with fond Imaginations of Eaſe and Leiſure to be Good, in a Country, or a College-life? But Cloiſters and Deſarts ſignifie nothing, without the Zeal and Diſpoſition of a Hermit. The Convenience of Place is very little; and all its boaſted Expectations vaniſh, except the Man be changed, as well as his Reſidence, and manner of Living. And this Change is not, cannot be effected, unleſs his Mind be fixed in Me, alone, as the proper, the only Centre of all its Affections and Deſires. The Liberty Men enjoy otherwiſe, is very ſhort and unfaithful; for freſh Occaſions of Sin and Trouble will quickly offer themſelves; and then, not only the old Inconveniences will return again, but new and greater, and ſuch as are peculiar to that new State of Life upon which they have entred: And thus their very Refuge becomes a freſh Temptation.

Chap. XXXII.

A Prayer for Purity of Heart, and Heavenly Wiſdom.

Diſciple.] *Eſtabliſh me, Lord, with thy free Spirit,* that being ſtrengthen'd in the Inner Man, I may purge my Soul from all vain Anxiety, and baniſh idle Fears, and get over the Diſcouragements and diſtracting Troubles of the World. Let not the wild and impatient Deſires of any thing here, though never ſo alluring and ſeemingly valuable, perplex my Thoughts and draw me off from Thee. Give me Grace to conſider my ſelf and all below, as things full of Vanity, and of very ſhort Continuance. For ſuch indeed are all Things under the Sun, *vexation of Spirit*, and *altogether lighter than Vani-*

Pſal. li. 11.

Vanity it ſelf. And He who conſtantly looks upon them as ſuch, is the truly, the only, Wiſe Man.

Impart to me then, O my God, I beſeech thee, that heavenly Wiſdom, which may diſpoſe me to ſeek thy Kingdom and thy Righteouſneſs; to Sell all for this one Pearl of great Price; and to eſteem my ſelf rich in no Treaſure but Thee; to *Matth.* xiii. love and delight in thee alone; to take Satisfaction in all things elſe, in ſuch Degrees, and in Subordination to ſuch Purpoſes only, as thou haſt appointed; and to receive every Diſpenſation of Providence, with ſuch a Spirit and Temper, as becomes my Duty, and may render it ſerviceable to the Ends, for which thou ſenteſt it. Grant me ſuch Prudence and Conduct in all my Converſation, that I may decline and deſpiſe the Inſinuations of Flatterers, and meekly receive the Contradiction and Reproaches of Gainſayers and Slanderers. For This is Wiſdom indeed, when a Man is not carried about with every Blaſt of Air, but ſtops his Ears againſt the Siren's Charms; and reſolutely proceeds in a ſtreight ſteady Courſe of Virtue, in deſpight of all the Subtlety of thoſe who labour to entice, or the Malice of Them who would terrifie and drive, him from it.

Chap. XXXIII.

How a Chriſtian ought to behave himſelf when Men ſpeak Evil of him.

Chriſt.] My Son, if Detractors and Slanderers ſpeak or think Ill of thee, let not this much diſturb thee. The Provocations to Impatience and angry Reſentments, which ſuch ill Treatment uſually miniſters, will be much better employed againſt thy

thy ſelf. Take then this Hint of improving thy Humility, by reflecting how many things which lye concealed from Humane Sight, thy own Mind is conſcious of; and the more Their wicked Malice labours to leſſen thy Reputation, ſo much the leſs do thou appear in thy own eſteem. If all be well within, and thy Heart right with Me, the impertinent Cenſures of buſie envious Men will make no very deep Impreſſion. And when Theſe reach thy Ears, inſtead of Recriminating and Indignation, it will be wiſely done, to look up to Me, and not to be diſordered at any Judgment, which Men ſhall take upon them to pronounce concerning thee. For why ſhould thy Satisfaction be placed upon a thing, which makes thee not one whit the better or the worſe? If they commend and cry thee up, thy real Merit is not the greater; And if they revile and run thee down, thy Innocence is not the leſs. Seek then true Honour and Satisfaction from Me, from Me alone; whoſe Sentence never ſwerves from Equity and Truth. And great ſhall thy Content and thy Quiet be, if thou neither ſollicitouſly court the Favour of Men, nor ſervilely fear their Cenſure and Diſpleaſure. For, after all the Complaints of outward Accidents, the true original Ground of all Diſquiet is within; For inordinate Affections and vain Fears are The polluted Fountain, from whence thoſe bitter Streams of Diſcontent, and perplexed Thoughts, and every Confuſion and Diſorder of a troubled Mind flow.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXIV.

How God ought to be addreſs'd to in Time of Adverſity.

Chriſt.] THE *Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and bleſſed be the Name of the Lord.* Job 1. 21.
Yea, bleſſed be thy Name, for this very Calamity, with which thy Fatherly Wiſdom and Affection hath now thought fit to chaſtiſe and try me. I cannot flee from the Scourge of thy Rod, but I will fly to thee for Succour; and beg that thou wouldſt aſſiſt me with Patience, and turn all my Sufferings to my Soul's Advantage. I am indeed in trouble; and cannot but confeſs the preſent Diſorder, which this Misfortune gives me. But this is my own Infirmity; and *I know not what to Pray for as I ought.* For what ſhall I ſay? *Lord, ſave me from this Hour.* No, deareſt Father; Thou hadſt not brought me to this Hour, had it not been for thy Glory, and my own Good. And therefore I will rather beg, that my Affliction may continue, till thy gracious Purpoſes are accompliſhed in me; and when thou ſeeſt me ſufficiently humbled, that then and not before, thou wouldſt refreſh, and raiſe, and deliver me out of it. Rom. viii. 26. John xii.

For my Deliverance, I am duly ſenſible, can come from no other Hand; ſince I my ſelf am weak, and poor, and blind, and know not what is beſt, or what to do. Grant me then, bleſſed Lord, a Reſcue in thy own due time; and in the mean while, ſtrengthen me with Patience, that by thy powerful Aid I may bear up againſt the ſharpeſt Tribulations, without Deſpondency or Diſtraction. *Not my Will, Lord, but thine be done*, ſhall be the conſtant Language of my Heart; My ſinful Heart; which acknowledges thy

Mercy in the midſt of Wrath; and ſadly reflects, that thou haſt puniſhed me much leſs than my Offences deſerve. O that this humble Senſe of my own Guilt may work in me ſuch Quiet and contented Submiſſion to thy Will, that I may neither unduly decline, nor unthankfully murmur at the weight or the length of my Sufferings, till thou ſee fit to compoſe this Storm, and reſtore to me the Comforts of thy Favour and indulgent Providence.

For, if the Tempeſt ſtill rage, this is not the Effect of want of Power in thee to quiet it; but becauſe a perfect Calm is not yet ſeaſonable for me. Thy mighty Hand can lay it in a moment, Thou canſt abate its Fury, or thou canſt protect and ſupport me under its Violence and Extremity. I know thou canſt; for thou haſt taught me by my own Experience; and the Remembrance of thy former Mercies will not ſuffer me to doubt the Efficacy of thy Power. But, in proportion as my Grief and Burden is greater, ſo much the ſweeter and more refreſhing let thy healing Virtue, and ſpiritual Conſolations be; and let me feel thy gracious Promiſe, *That thou wilt not ſuffer thy Servants to be tempted above that they are able, but wilt with the Temptation alſo make a Way to eſcape, that they may be able to bear it.*

1 Cor. x. 13.

Chap. XXXV.

How the Divine Aſſiſtance ſhould be ſought, and depended upon.

Chriſt.] I Am that Lord, my Son, who is the Stronghold of afflicted Men in the Time of Trouble; and in whom thou doſt well to take Sanctuary, in all thy Diſtreſſes. But if thy Comforts make

Nahum 1.

make not haſt, thou doſt thy ſelf frequently obſtruct and diſappoint thy own Expectations, by deferring thy Prayers, and by ſlowneſs to ask Relief. For Men generally try all other Comforts and Remedies firſt, and reſerve Me for their laſt Refuge, in Times of ſuch Extremity that nothing will do them Service; and then my Honour is concerned, not only todefeat thoſe Humane Contrivances, in which theyvainly truſted; but to defer my own Succours; and, by making them ſmart for their impious Neglect, compel them to acknowledge, that I am the Deliverer of Them that truſt in Me; and that, without me, no Succours are ſtrong, no Counſels wiſe, no Remedies ſucceſsful; And if their Sufferings find ſome preſent Abatement, this only Skins the Wound, but is no perfect Cure, and the Pain it aſſwages will return again with doubled Anguiſh and Rage. For I alone, who gave the Stroke, can heal it; and, as there is no Evil, which the Lord hath not done, ſo neither is their any Deliverance which the Lord hath not wrought.

But now thy Applications are come up into my Ears and thou haſt caſt thy ſelf upon my Mercy, I will revive thy drooping Spirits, and thou ſhalt, after this dark diſmal Storm, rejoyce again in the Light of my Countenance. For I am ready not only to reſtore thy former Happineſs, but alſo to recompence thy paſt Pains and Patience, by plentiful Additions of more and greater Bleſſings. And let not any Adverſity, though never ſo grievous, prevail upon thy Frailty to diſtruſt my doing ſo; For, Can there any thing be hard for me? Or am I like deceitful Men, who ſooth their Dependants up with Promiſes which they never deſign to perform? Have I at any time broken my Word? Where then is thy Faith, where thy Courage? bear bravely up and diſcharge thy Duty. For, if thou fail not to qualifie thy ſelf for receiving them, Grace and Conſolation ſhall certainly approach in due time. *If*

Hab. ii. *the Lord tarry, yet wait for him,* for he *will ſurely come* and heal thee. The Load, which now oppreſſes thee, is only laid there, to try thy Strength and Virtue; nor would it weigh thee down ſo low, if thy own Folly did not make it heavier, by heaping on anxious Cares for the future upon thy preſent Sufferings. But this is to conſpire againſt thy ſelf, and turn thy own Tormenter. *Sufficient to each Day is the Evil thereof*; without charging it with additional Troubles which no way belong to it. Theſe are indeed impertinent and ſenſleſs at all times; For how abſurd is it to exalt or deject one's ſelf, by Hopes and Fears, and fond Repreſentations of diſtant Good and Evil, which have not any being in Nature, and probably may never be at all? Diſmiſs theſe empty, but painful Follies; the mere Creatures of thy own ſick Fancy: For ſuch Deluſions are a great Reproach upon Reaſon, and a greater yet upon Chriſtianity; when thy mean timorous Soul is mocked by ſuch airy Phantomes, and ſo very eaſily led Captive by the Enemy's Suggeſtions. And ſuch are theſe deſponding or ſanguine Thoughts of what will be hereafter. Whether it be or not, he matters not; for his Buſineſs is to deceive and undo Men. And true or falſe Hopes and Terrors contribute equally to this Deſign: The Love of preſent Good, and Dread of approaching Evils, are Inſtruments of Ruine employed by him, with wonderful Addreſs; and, ſo Ruine be but the Conſequence, the Methods and Management of it are altogether indifferent to him.

Matth. vi. 34.

Do not therefore ſuffer Fear to deject thee, but ſtill maintain thy Chriſtian Courage, and repoſe thy Confidence in my Mercy. I am often ready at hand, when thou ſuppoſeſt me at a diſtance; and, at thoſe times, when all is given for gone, things are ſo far from deſperate, that proſperous Events and moſt ſurpriſing Com-

Comforts are breaking in upon thee, like a glorious Sun from an aſtoniſhing Eclipſe. 'Tis Raſhneſs therefore to conclude Affairs in a loſt Condition, becauſe ſome Croſſes have balked your Expectations: Nor can either your own Reſentment of Misfortunes within, or the Violence of any Calamity without, give you ſufficient Grounds, from the terrible Face your preſent Circumſtances wear, to pronounce, That all Hope of Eſcape and better Days is paſt. Nay, which is the moſt ſenſible and moſt deplorable Caſe of any, if at the ſame time that I Scourge thee with outward Calamities, thou feel the inward Supports of my Grace withdrawn, which ſhould enable to bear the Rod; Yet even ſo, think not thy ſelf forſaken, or that I have utterly caſt thee from my Preſence. The Way to Heaven is ſet with Briars and Thorns, and they who arrive at that Kingdom, travel over cragged Rocks and comfortleſs Deſarts: And more it is for their advantage to have their Virtue awakened, and brightned, and brought to the Teſt, by the Smart of Adverſity; than that all things ſhould go ſmoothly on, without any manner of Let or Moleſtation.

The Heart of Man is deceitful, who can know it? Thy very ſelf art often under very dangerous Miſtakes about thy own Condition. Thou art ignorant what thou art, and much more ignorant what is fit for thee. But I, who have a perfect Underſtanding of both, ſee plainly, that it is proper and beneficial ſometimes to be left to thy ſelf; that thus, ſtruggling to ſo little purpoſe with the Calamities that bear thee down, thou may'ſt be brought to a juſt and humble Senſe of thy Infirmities; that this Senſe may check thy Vanity, and ſhew that all thy Attempts which prove ſucceſsful, are owing entirely to another Hand; and Thou in truth nothing leſs than that mighty Man thou art apt to take thy ſelf for. This makes my depriving thee of thy uſual Comforts convenient, but ſtill 'tis in my Power

to reſtore and augment them to thee, when I ſee That convenient too.

Nor think me hard and unjuſt in theſe Diſpenſations; for who ſhall forbid me to do what I will with my own? I gave thee what thou could'ſt not claim; and I take away what thou haſt no right to keep. For *every good and perfect Gift is mine*, and not a Debt, but a Favour. If then Affliction comes, remember 'tis of my ſending; and I, who laid the Croſs, can both remove and recompence it: I *kill and make alive*, I *bring down to the Grave, and raiſe up from it*; And in the inſtant that I lay my Thunder by, and Smile again, thy Heavineſs ſhall be changed into Joy unſpeakable.

James i. 17.

1 Sam. ii.

In all my Dealings I am juſt, in all am wiſe, and good; and deſerve, not only thy Admiration, but even thy Thanks and Praiſe; Could'ſt thou but rightly comprehend my Methods and the ſecret Reaſons of them, thou would'ſt drink up the bitter Potion with Joy; With Joy, upon this very Conſideration, that I do not ſpare thee to thy hurt, but ſend Afflictions in pure kindneſs to thee, when I foreſee they will be for thy advantage. Obſerve the Tenure of my gracious Promiſe to my beſt beloved Diſciples: *As my Father loved me, even ſo have I loved you.* But both my Father's Love to Me, and Mine to Them was expreſs'd, not by falſe and tranſitory Joys, but by ſharp and long Conflicts; by being called, not to Honours, but to Contumelies and Diſgrace; not by indulging them in Eaſe and Sloth, but by inuring them to Tryals and Difficulties; by calling them, not to Reſt and Peace, but to bring forth noble and generous Fruit with Patience. Remember well theſe Words, my Son, and then thou canſt not think much, to *drink of the Cup that I drank of* ſo deeply, and to be *baptized with the Baptiſm that I was baptized with*. Thou canſt not then deſpair, or think that God,

John xvi.

God, in afflicting thee, hath abandoned all Care and Concern for thy Benefit, ſince even that tender, that unparalell'd, that unconceivable Affection, with which he loved his own dear Son, hindred not his making that *very Captain of thy Salvation perfect through Sufferings.* And what art thou? Hebr. ii. What is the beſt of Men in compariſon of Him? What are thy Agonies and Tryals, the very worſt of thine, in compariſon of His?

CHAP. XXXVI.

Of ſeeking God alone.

Diſciple.] THy Mercy, Lord, is great, which hath thus far aſſiſted me; but ſtill I feel I want a larger Portion of thy Grace, which may conduct me to ſuch a State of Perfection, as may ſecure and ſet me at liberty, from all the Obſtructions, which the Creatures lay in my way. For ſo long as I retain an Affection or Concern for any thing in this World, I find my Soul checkt and reſtrained in her Mountings to Thee and Heaven. How often do I make the Prophet's Wiſh my own, *Oh that I had Wings like a Dove, for then would I fly away and be at reſt; Lo then would I get me away far off*, and remain at a diſtance from the World. Now what is more at eaſe, more abſtracted from the World, than a true ſingle-hearted Honeſty? What can boaſt of Freedom equal to His, who covets nothing upon Earth? All created Beings ſhould indeed be paſſed over, and left behind in this Flight, and a Man muſt make a Stretch even beyond himſelf, and abandon his own natural Inclinations and Defects, in order to get a diſtinct View of the Creator, and thoſe Perfections in Him, to which Pſalm lv.

no Creature bears any reſemblance. Now This is the very Reaſon, why ſo few employ their Thoughts in heavenly Contemplations with any ſenſible Delight; becauſe when they attempt it, they do it unskilfully; and bring thoſe worldly Affections along with them, that damp and diſguſt them in the Undertaking.

It is not, I confeſs, an eaſie Matter, nay, 'tis not poſſible to Fleſh and Blood, by its own Strength, thus to purge the Affections; Nothing leſs than a liberal and very powerful Inſpiration of Divine Grace can thus exalt the Mind, and as it were carry the Man out of himſelf: But till ſuch Exaltation of the Soul have diſengaged one from all temporal Intereſts, and fixt down his Deſires to that one Object worthy of them, God himſelf; all his Knowledge and imagined Excellencies are very little worth. For whatever falſe Notions of Honour and Greatneſs Men may delude themſelves with, yet ſtill all They have poor and little Souls, and dote upon that which ought to be diſdained, who allow any thing, beſides the Infinite and Eternal God, a very honourable Place in their Affections and Eſteem. For All which is not God, is Vanity and Nothing, and ought to be nothing regarded. How vaſt a difference there is, between the Wiſdom of a mortified pious Man, enlightned from above; and the pompous Learning of a profound and ſtudious Divine? That Knowledge, which deſcends from above, ſpeaks its heavenly Original, by marvellous and noble Effects; and works a greater Change in the Man, a greater Improvement in profitable Knowledge; than all that Comprehenſion, which the beſt Capacities, and the moſt indefatigable Induſtry can ever attain to.

We often hear very glorious Characters of Divine Contemplation, and the wonderful Delights and Tranſports attending it; and Theſe a great many appear very

very fond of, but then they have no regard to the neceſſary Preparations for it; Their Minds are full of ſenſible Ideas, and poſſeſs'd with the Things of this preſent World, and the ſubduing and mortifying their Deſires and Paſſions is a Matter they take no care about: And while their Affairs continue in this Poſture, they are in no degree qualify'd for thoſe Exerciſes of the Mind. Methinks it is a moſt unaccountable Folly, and argues, that Men forget what Spirit they are of, when they call themſelves Chriſtians, *i. e.* Spiritual Perſons, that have ſolemnly renounced the World with its Vanities, and the Fleſh with its ſinful Luſts; who profeſs to believe and to ſeek Happineſs in a future State, and to place that Happineſs in the Perfection of their Souls; and yet, in Reproach and Contradiction to theſe Profeſſions, ſuffer Body and Senſe to run away with them; lay out themſelves entirely upon periſhing and paltry Advantages, while the ſubſtantial and everlaſting are wretchedly neglected, and their Souls ſo perfectly forgotten, that they ſcarce afford one ſerious Thought to their moſt important Concerns. Or, if at any time we ſet our ſelves to think, ſome Trifle preſently interrupts and draws us off from any profitable Recollections. Nay, we our ſelves fly out, and are glad to be diverted from a ſevere Examination into our own State, which is ſure, if diligently purſued, to preſent us with Objects of Shame and Sorrow, ſuch as will wound our Sight, and ſoon make us weary of this neceſſary Work. Thus we never trouble our ſelves, to obſerve, which way our Inclinations are diſpoſed, or whither they tend; nor do we ſeriouſly bewail the abominable Impurity of our Hearts, though there be nothing but Impurity there. *The way of all Fleſh is corrupt upon the Earth*; and that univerſal Corruption, ſays the Scripture, brought a Flood to deſtroy Mankind and every Creature. But whence, do we think, Gen. vi.

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proceeds ſuch Corruption of Manners? From the corrupt Affections of Men, no doubt. For, if this Fountain be not ſweet, the Action, which is but a Stream and Emanation from it, muſt of neceſſity be flat and bitter. For a pure Heart is the Ground-work of a holy Life; and as naturally ſprings from it, as the Fruit from the Tree.

And herein we are much to blame, that ſo little Regard is had to the Diſpoſitions of the Heart; without which no true Judgment can ever be made, either of our ſelves or others. But this, which is in truth of greateſt Conſequence; The very Point, upon which a Man's whole Character turns, ſeems to be laid aſide, as a thing too nice and ſpeculative to be very curious in. We fix our Eyes upon the outward Action, conſider What or How much a Man hath done; but with what Sincerity, with what Zeal, with what honeſt Intention he did it, or whether with none of all theſe Qualifications, we trouble not our ſelves to enquire. So again, For the Eſtimate we make of Perſons, they are all forreign from the true and proper Foundation of Merit and Reſpect: The Riches, Valour, Beauty, Judgment, Wit, Eloquence, a good Style, or a ſweet Voice, or a Knack of Management in Town or Country-buſineſs, his Preferments, or his Profeſſion, Theſe we immediately take care to be informed of, and proportion our Value and Reſpects accordingly; but a Man's Humility and Poverty of Spirit, his Meekneſs and Patience, his Devotion and Piety, Theſe are ſeldom mentioned in the Character, or recommended as Motives to induce Regard. Thus Nature and Grace have their different Proſpects and Affections. The *former* looks at the Outſide of a Man, and rates him according to things that are not his; the *latter* places all within, and ſets not at all by external Ornaments and Advantages: The *former* builds upon a falſe

falſe bottom, ſeeks her ſelf what ſhe values in others, and is oftentimes deceived and diſappointed: The *latter* repoſes her whole Hope and Love in God, and is never miſtaken, never deluded by falſe Expectations.

Chap. XXXVII.

Of Self-denial.

Chriſt.] THou canſt not, *Son*, be entirely free, till thou have firſt attained to ſuch a Maſtery, as entirely to ſubdue, and deny thy ſelf. For covetous Perſons, and lovers of Themſelves, the luſtful, and buſie, and unſettled Men, the lovers of Pleaſure more than lovers of God, are all Slaves; Vile and unprofitable Slaves; condemned to fruitleſs endleſs Toil; ſeeking what they cannot find, and contriving what they cannot compaſs; Or if they could, what they cannot long enjoy. For every thing which is not of God, is ſoon brought to nought. Obſerve this ſhort, but certain, Aphoriſm: *Forſake all, and thou ſhalt find all*; let go Deſire, and thou ſhalt lay hold on Peace. Conſider this Rule diligently, and tranſcribe it into thy Practice, for Practice will explain and prove it to thee.

Diſciple.] This, Lord, is not the Work of a ſingle Day, a Maxime not fitted for weak Capacities, but ſuch as in one ſhort Sentence contains the utmoſt Perfection of a pious and reſigned Chriſtian.

Chriſt.] And why, *my Son*, ſhould that Perfection affright or diſcourage thee? Call up thy Zeal, aſpire to true Greatneſs of Soul, and the nobler the Virtue is, the more eager and generous Reſolution do thou expreſs of attaining to it. O! that thou wert of that happy

happy Diſpoſition, which utterly diſcards all narrow and ſelfiſh Conſiderations, and ſubmits it ſelf entirely to the Obedience of my Commands, and the Diſpoſals of my Providence! So ſhould thy Perſon and thy Behaviour be acceptable to thy God; So ſhould'ſt thou enjoy great Satisfaction, and Peace in thy own Breaſt. Alas! there are ſtill many things which muſt be abandoned, Many, which till thou haſt ſacrificed to me, the Happineſs thou aimeſt at can never be obtained. Buy therefore of me the pure refined Gold of a heavenly and reſigned Diſpoſition; for That ſhall make thee rich, above all the Treaſures of this World. Caſt off the Wiſdom of this Generation, and do not ſooth thy ſelf with their fooliſh Imaginations: For they purſue Shadows, and take delight in Vanity and Nothing. Remember I have told thee, that the things which are lightly eſteemed muſt be purchaſed at the expence of thoſe, which this World eſteems moſt precious. For what is more deſpiſed and mean in common Reputation, what more neglected and forgotten, than that true heavenly Wiſdom, which renounces all Merit of its own, and is content to be diſregarded by the Men of this World? This mortified and humble State of Mind, is what indeed ſome People profeſs, and in Words commend; but their Practice plainly condemns it, and gives the lye to all their diſſembled Praiſes. And yet this Wiſdom, poor and deſpicable as it appears to common Eyes, is that Pearl of Great Price, for which all other Poſſeſſions are wiſely given in exchange. That hidden Treaſure, which is always like to continue hid, ſince it lyes low, and few either do, or care to, find it.

Matth. xiii.

CHAP.

Chap. XXXVIII.

The Changeableneſs of our Temper, and how to fix it.

Chriſt.] Do not, my Son, depend upon any preſent Diſpoſition of Mind, with which thou feeleſt thy ſelf affected, for This is fickle and of ſhort Duration. Variety and Change is what Men muſt be Subject to, ſo long as they carry the Frailties of Fleſh and Blood about them; and all their Endeavours cannot ſo fix their Hearts, as to keep them conſtantly the ſame. Sometimes they find themſelves diſpoſed to Mirth, ſometimes to Melancholy, now they are Even and Serene, by and by all over Diſorder and Confuſion; this Hour Fervent and Devout, the next Lukewarm and Cold; Studious and Induſtrious to Day, Slothful and Unfit for Buſineſs to Morrow; Serious and Grave and Thoughtful now, and anon again Gay and Trifling and Light as Air. But the truly wiſe Man, who is acted by the Spirit of God, gets above this changeable Region of the lower World; He ſuffers not himſelf to be carried about with every Blaſt and Impulſe of Inconſtancy, but Settles upon the Baſis of the One excellent End, which is always firſt and moſt in his Thoughts, the Port to which he makes, and the Compaſs by which he ſteers all his Deſigns and Actions. For by this Method it is very poſſible for a Man to continue unſhaken, and unmoved, by any Guſt of Inclination from within, or Accident from without. The natural Changeableneſs of Humane Affections being yet more improved, by Mens own voluntary Uncertainty, and propoſing no conſtant End or Rule to themſelves. Now that Intention, which fixes upon God as its only End, will keep Men ſteady in their Purpoſes; and deliver them from being

being the Jeſt and Scorn of Fortune; and this in Scripture is ſtyled *a Single Eye*, becauſe it ever looks and aims but at one Object.

The more intent then that Eye is in this Proſpect, the leſs diverted from its Mark, the firmer and more conſiſtent Men are with themſelves; and the leſs Impreſſion does any Change of Wind or Weather make upon ſuch diligent and wiſe Pilots. But ſtill Infirmity prevails in moſt, and if ſome Pleaſure or Profit come betwixt, they retain ſo much Tenderneſs for themſelves, and their temporal Advantages; as to be diverted from the ſame vigorous Purſuit of their firſt Prize, and allow this freſh one a part at leaſt of their Endeavours and Deſires. They love God, but they would love the World too; and in this State of divided Affections ſomewhat reſemble the *Jews*; who, as the Evangeliſt obſerves, came to viſit *Martha* and *Mary* at *Bethany*, not only that they might ſee and hear Jeſus, but that they might ſatisfie their Curioſity in gazing upon *Lazarus*, whom he had raiſed from the Dead. It muſt therefore be your great Care and Buſineſs to compoſe this Diſtraction of Thought, to fix your Heart to one Purpoſe, to ſeek one Good, one End, ſo zealouſly, that nothing elſe may come into Competition or Partnerſhip with it; to look upon every thing which diverts you from, or cools you in this Purſuit, with an Eye of Contempt; and conſtantly to keep your Hope and Deſire and Love (which are the Spring and Guide of all your Actions) upon Me alone.

John xii. 9.

CHAP.

Chap. XXXIX.

The Happineſs of them who love God.

Diſciple.] IN having God, I have all things: *For whom can I have in Heaven but Thee, and what is there upon Earth that I can deſire in compariſon of Thee?* Oh ſweet and comfortable Words! But this is a Sweetneſs, which none can taſt, but they who love the Word of God, and *not the World, neither the Things that be in the World.* My God to me is All; I need add no more; the Men of purified Underſtandings find this enough, and they of purified and heavenly Affections cannot repeat it too often. When Thou art preſent, Affliction and Death are pleaſant; for in thy Favour is Life and Joy. When thou art abſent, Life it ſelf is a Burden; for thy Diſpleaſure is worſe than Death. Thou makeſt a merry Heart, a cheerful Countenance, in Thee is abundance of Peace, and a continual Feaſt. Thou giveſt me right Notions of all Events, and rendereſt every Accident a Matter of Joy and Praiſe to me; without Thee Proſperity it ſelf is nauſeous, and I loath my very Mercies. For nothing here below can pleaſe our Palate, unleſs thy Favour and Wiſdom give it a grateful Reliſh. To him that feeds delightfully on thee, every bitter Morſel is ſweet; but they who want or ſlight that heavenly Entertainment, find the moſt delicious Dainties harſh and bitter.

Pſal. lxxiii.

1 Joh. ii. 15.

They who are wiſe for the World and the Fleſh, are moſt defective in the true and heavenly Wiſdom. The carnal Wiſdom ends in Guilt and Death, and the worldly Wiſdom purſues Vanity and empty Pomp. But they who are wiſe indeed conform themſelves to thy Example, by a Contempt of all earthly Greatneſs, and

and a vigorous Mortification of their ſenſual Appetites and Paſſions; They diſdain the Shadow, and lay hold on the Subſtance; paſs from Falſhood to Truth, and from Body to Spirit. Theſe are the Men, who love and delight in God, and find no Satisfaction in the Creatures, farther than as they promote the Honour, and ſerve the Purpoſes, of the great Creator. The Joys they miniſter are ſubordinate and limited: Not inherent and natural, but by reflection only; and every thing is eſteemed, in proportion as it tends to its Maker's Uſe and Praiſe. So very unlike, ſo infinitely different, is the Pleaſure we feel from the Creator and the Creature, from the boundleſs Ocean of Eternity, and the narrow Tract of Time; from the original ſelf-exiſtent Light, and thoſe faint Beams ſhot down on things here below.

Shine then, O Light everlaſting; in compariſon whereof all created Lights are but a leſs degree of Darkneſs: Convey thy ſelf into my benighted Soul, purge and diſpel the Clouds of Error there, purifie my polluted Affections, cheer my Sadneſs, enliven my ſtupid Mind and all its Faculties; that I may rejoyce, and triumph, and bask in thy bright Beams. Oh when will that happy, that long-wiſh'd for Hour approach, when I ſhall be filled with thy Luſtre, and ſatisfied with thy Preſence, and my God be my All in all! For, ſure I am, till that bleſs'd Time, my Joys muſt be imperfect. I feel, alas! I feel and lament in my ſelf ſome Remains of the old Man ſtill. Scourged he is, but not entirely crucified; wounded and bruiſed, but not quite dead. My Fleſh, in deſpight of all my painful Labours, continues to luſt againſt the Spirit; and a domeſtick War diſtracts and breaks the Peace and good Government of my Mind: This cannot exerciſe its juſt Dominion without perpetual Broils and tumultuous Inſurrections. But, O thou *who ruleſt the Raging of the Sea, and ſtilleſt the Waves*

Pſal. lxvi.

Waves thereof, when they arise, come speedily to my assistance, and quell this Storm. *Scatter my Enemies that delight in Bloud, and beat them down, O Lord, my Defence*; Exert thy mighty Power, and get thee Honour by this Conquest, for thou, O Lord, my God, art my only Hope, and Helper; O save, or I perish.

Chap. XL.

This Life a State of continual Temptation.

Christ.] DO not suppose, my Son, that in this World thou ever can'st be in a condition of absolute Safety; Dangers and Enemies await thee every-where; Violence and Stratagems are perpetually employed for thy Ruine; and therefore the Weapons of thy Spiritual Warfare must not be laid aside, for useful they are, and always necessary, during this State of Mortality. Cover thy self then with the Shield of Wisdom, and Faith, for if thou expose thy Person without this Defence, the fiery Darts of the Wicked will quickly gall and wound thee. And if Dexterity, and Diligence in the Use of thy Arms be not animated by a Mind fixed entirely upon Me, and a vigorous Resolution of Enduring the worst that can happen for my Sake; the Engagement will be found too hot, and that Crown of the Blessed, which is the Reward of Perseverance, can never belong to thee. Call up thy Courage then, and exert thy utmost Strength, as occasions of Combat shall offer. For *to Him that overcometh will I give the hidden Manna*; But Misery and utter Destruction is the Portion of fainthearted and feeble, slothful and sleepy Soldiers. Rev. ii.

If then these are the Conditions of thy Obedience and Reward, think how absurd it is for Them, who indulge their Ease here, to expect Peace and Happiness hereafter. In one of the two States Enduring must be thy Lot; and therefore tough Patience, and not soft Repose, is what thou should'st labour for at present: For Rest and undisturbed Content have now no place on Earth, nor can the greatest Affluence of worldly Good procure them; but their dwelling is in Heaven only, and they are peculiar to the Love and Fruition of God alone. In obedience to his Will, you should contentedly undergo Labour and Toil, Tryals and Troubles, Distress and Anguish of Heart, Poverty and Want, Infirmities and Diseases, Injuries and Affronts, Scandal and Reproach, Disparagement and Disgrace, Punishment and Torture. These whet and brighten a Christian's Virtue, exercise and distinguish him. These Thorns are woven into Wreaths of Glory; and to such faithful Servants I repay for their short Hardship an endless Recompence; and for the Shame, which is presently forgotten, Lawrels that never fade, Crowns always bright, and Honours firm and immortal as my own.

These are the Difficulties of the present State, which Men are to be upon their Guard against from without. But alas! they must not hope always to enjoy Peace and Satisfaction within. No, Even the Saints of old, whose purer Innocence and eminent Virtues might better entitle them to this Tranquillity, yet often found occasion to complain, That *their Heart was disquieted, their Spirit desolate, and an horrible Dread overwhelmed them.* Doubts and Scruples, Temptations and Fears, and cutting Perplexities of Heart are frequently the Lot of the most excellent Persons. But in all these Straights the Good behave themselves with Meekness and Patience; reposing their Confidence in God, and humbly distrusting themselves,

Psal. lv, cxliii.

ſelves, but ſupported, with the Hopes of Divine Grace and Favour, to comfort and aſſiſt them; and with the Conſideration, that the *Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory, that ſhall be revealed in them.* This was the Caſe of thoſe glorified Saints who are thy Patterns; and what Pretence canſt thou have, to hope for that Joy in preſent, which they waited long for, and purchaſed at the Expence of ſore Pains and many Tears, and great Difficulties; and thought themſelves well paid even thus? Wait then thy Maſter's leiſure, quit thy ſelf manfully, baniſh Impatience and Diſtruſt, perſevere in Faith and good Works; grudge not to lay out Perſon, Life, All; for the Service and Glory of God; and doubt not but I will one Day abundantly reward, and in the mean time will ſtand by thee, to ſuſtain and deliver thee in every Danger and Calamity.

Chap. XLI.

Of Deſpiſing the vain Cenſures of Men.

Chriſt.] MY Son, repoſe thy Soul upon God, caſt all thy Care there, and let it be thy great, thy only Concern, to approve thy ſelf to Him. When this is done, a Man ſhould not much regard what the World thinks of him, nor fear the Cenſures of others, while his own Conſcience bears Teſtimony to his Piety and Innocence. To be ill thought of is ſometimes for thy Good; it conforms thee to the Image of thy Saviour, and if thy Soul like His be meek and humble, if thou ſeek not thy own Glory, but His that ſent thee, the Affliction will not be very grievous to be born. The Opinions of Men are as many and as different as their Perſons;

The greateſt Diligence and moſt prudent Conduct can never pleaſe them all. And therefore even St. *Paul* himſelf, than whom none ever laboured more to recommend his Actions to the good Acceptance of the World, *He who became all things to all Men*, yet found it neceſſary to appeal to a higher Court, and declared *it a ſmall thing with him to be judged of Man's Judgment.* He did his utmoſt to promote the Intereſt and Salvation of Others, but even the utmoſt he could do was not ſufficient to skreen him from the wrongful Cenſures, and perverſe Miſconſtructions of Men. And therefore he removed his Cauſe, and referred the whole Matter to that God who knew his Integrity; and defended himſelf againſt the Calumnies and Reproaches of licentious Tongues, with great Humility and Invincible Patience. Sometimes he heard and paſſed their Slanders by, in ſilence; At other times he vindicated his own Innocence, and reproved the unreaſonable Malice of his Accuſers; not ſo much in tenderneſs to his own Honour, as to prevent any Offence which might be taken from his forbearing to do ſo; and leſt the Weak and Ignorant ſhould conclude, that too obſtinate a Silence was an Argument of his Guilt.

1 Cor. ix.

1 Cor. iv.

But what is there ſo terrible in the Condemnation of Man? For what indeed is Man? He lives and flouriſhes to Day; but to Morrow he is gone, and his Place ſhall know him no more. Fear God then, and his Judgment; for this is Omniſcient and Everlaſting; and the more thou feareſt Him, the leſs thou wilt be afraid of any but Him. Conſider well, what Hurt can come to thee by enjurious and reproachful Treatment. Alas! they who accuſe and blacken thee wrongfully, are much the greateſt Sufferers by their own Malice and Injuſtice. Their Slander and Detraction can have no Influence, can make no Impreſſion, upon

upon the Righteous Judge above. None to Thy Prejudice, but a ſad and fatal one to their own; for they cannot eſcape his Judgment, who hath declared, that they who *judge ſhall be judged, that they ſhall have Judgment without Mercy who ſhew no Mercy; and that the ſame Meaſure they mete to Others, he will meaſure to Them again.* Keep God then always in thy Mind, and let go Quarrel and Contention, nor embroil thy ſelf in Troubles and Differences, by being over-ſollicitous in thy own Defence. If thou at preſent ſeem to be oppreſs'd with Diſgrace and ill Reports, which thou haſt not deſerved; bear thy Burden contentedly: Blemiſh not thy Innocence by too deep Reſentment; nor take off from the Brightneſs of thy Crown by Anger and Impatience, and Eagerneſs to Right thy ſelf. Reflect on Me, who once endured ſuch Contradiction of obſtinate and implacable Sinners; and am now ſet down at the right Hand of the Throne of God. Look up to Heaven, and remember, there is One, who can make thy Innocence as clear as the Light, and thy Righteouſneſs ſhine like the Sun at Noon-day; One, who will conſider, not only thy Infamy and Wrong, but thy Manner of Bearing it; and the more meek, more injured thou haſt been, the kinder and more bountiful Rewarder thou ſhalt be ſure to find me.

Matth. vii. 1 Pet. iv.

Heb. xii.

Pſal. xxxvii.

Chap. XLII.

A Chriſtian muſt devote himſelf entirely to God before he can be happy.

Chriſt.] *Loſe thy Life and thou ſhalt find it*, forſake thy ſelf and thou ſhalt poſſeſs Me; eſteem and have nothing, and thou ſhalt enjoy all things. For I will recompence thee with greater Treaſures, and infinitely increaſe thy Store, when thou haſt made over into my Hands all that thou haſt and art.

Diſciple.] How often, Lord, muſt I repeat this Gift, and what are the Inſtances, wherein I muſt forſake my ſelf.

Chriſt.] All Times, my Son, are ſeaſonable; and every Action, every Accident of thy Life, furniſhes a freſh and proper Occaſion, for doing it. I can admit of no Reſerves, but expect thee ſtript of all, and nothing left which I have not a Title to. For how canſt thou be mine, and I thine, except thy own Will be renounced in every thing, and no Property or Claim any longer remaining unconveyed over? The ſooner thou executeſt this Deed, the better it will be for thee: and the more full and expreſs, the more frank and ſincere thou art in it, the more favourable will be my Acceptance, and the more valuable Conſideration ſhalt thou receive. Some indeed there are who pretend to give themſelves; but the Conveyance is ſo clogged with Proviſo's, and Limitations, that the Title they make is worth nothing. They truſt themſelves to God by halves, and are for making their beſt of the World at the ſame time. Others again do this without Exceptions, but then in Difficulties and Temptations they repent of their Bargain, and revoke the Grant. Theſe Men make no conſiderable Improvement in Virtue, nor do they taſt the Sweets of Piety; which conſiſt

ſiſt in a Mind at large from the World, and the Friendſhip and familiar Converſation of God. But ſuch Spiritual Advantages cannot in the nature of the thing be imparted to any, whoſe Affections are not entirely agreeable and inſeparably united to mine; and this requires the total Reſignation of a Man's ſelf, and the daily Offering of his whole *Spirit and Soul and Body, a holy lively and reaſonable Sacrifice unto me.* I have often ſaid it, and now repeat it once more; That *He who would receive All muſt in exchange give All.* Do not then expect, or call in, any thing again, but give freely and cheerfully, and depend ſolely upon Me, without Doubts or Demurrs. Me thou ſhalt have in return, and with me perfect Freedom and ſaving Knowledge. Prevail with thy ſelf to give up all without Intent or Power of Revocation; and pray earneſtly, that thou may'ſt gladly follow Chriſt, in all his Sufferings and loweſt State; that thou may'ſt renounce all Property, and throw thy ſelf naked into his Embraces: that thou may'ſt die to the World at preſent, and by ſo doing live to Me for ever. When this is done, all vain Imaginations will be baniſhed; Luſt will diſturb thee no more, nor Paſſions ruffle, nor anxious Cares perplex thee; Exceſſive Fears will run and hide their Head; Inordinate Deſires will ſicken and dye; Sorrow and Diſquiet find no place; and if Temptations try, yet can they not moleſt, thee.

CHAP. XLIII.

How to govern One's ſelf in the Affairs of the World.

Chriſt. BE ſure, my Son, to take good heed, that Buſineſs and Care never get within thee, but whatever Conſtraint they may lay upon thy Actions, and outward Attendance, yet keep thy Mind always at its own diſpoſal. Do Buſineſs, but be not a Slave to it; and remember thy Prerogative is to govern, and not to ſerve, the things of the World. Thou art a *Hebrew*, of the Spiritual Seed of *Abraham*, aſſert thy native Liberty: But why I do call thee a Freeborn Son of *Abraham*, Thou art a great deal more, *tranſlated out of Bondage into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God, Partaker of the Inheritance with the Saints in Light:* Such Birth, ſuch Hopes, ſuch a Condition ſhould raiſe and enoble thy Soul, trample upon the preſent, and graſp at nothing leſs than Eternity; Caſt only now and then a diſdainful Glance upon this World, as a thing by the by; but keep thy Eye immovably and directly fixt upon Heaven, as thy ſure Proſpect, thy main Concern; It will ill become thy Quality to dwell upon Trifles, or ſubject thy ſelf to things temporal: Theſe thou muſt make bend to thy Pleaſure, ſubmit and ſerve thy Occaſions. For ſo their great Creator intended they ſhould, who is the Author and Lover of Order, and would have every Work of his contained within its proper Poſt and Station.

Coloſſ. i.

If thou at any time art intangled in Difficulties, rely not upon Humane Prudence, nor truſt the falſe Repreſentations, with which thy Senſes, and worldly Affections, or the miſtaken Judgment of others ſo diſpoſed would impoſe upon thee. But remember *Moſes*,

Moſes, and go with Him into the Tabernacle to ask Counſel of thy God: There thou ſhalt often meet a proper Anſwer, have many Thoughts ſeaſonably ſuggeſted to thy Mind, and return wiſer, both for this and the next World, than thou wert before. For *Moſes* always took this Courſe in doubtful Caſes and important Exigences; He made Prayer his Weapon and Refuge, by it he vanquiſhed many Dangers, the Malice of Enemies and wicked Men, eſcaped and detected their deviliſh Deſigns, and retorted the Miſchiefs they intended, back upon their own Heads. Now what that Tabernacle was to Him, thy Cloſet and thy Conſcience are to Thee. Neglect not then by any means to conſult this Oracle, and implore the Directions and Aſſiſtances of Divine Grace. For the ill Conſequences of acting upon thy own Head, without theſe Precautions, are intimated to thee by that Inſtance of *Joſhua* and the *Iſraelites*: Who are expreſly ſaid to have been deceived by the *Gibionites*, to their great Prejudice; becauſe they gave too eaſie Credit to their flattering fair Pretences, and engaged in a League without firſt enquiring of the Lord. *Exod.* xxxiii. *Joſh.* ix.

Chap. XLIV.

Againſt too great Eagerneſs in Buſineſs.

Chriſt.] My Son, commit thy Affairs to my Care, and I will in due time bleſs them with a proper, and profitable Iſſue. But wait with Patience till that appointed Time of mine, and do not anticipate the Methods of my Providence, for I know how to convert every Delay to thy Advantage.

Diſ-

Diſciple.] Lord, I moſt willingly commit my Concerns to thy Management, for All that little I am capable of is very inſignificant. And therefore I cannot but wiſh, that this Senſe to how little purpoſe all my own Pains and Contrivances are, might free me from anxious Thoughts concerning future Contingencies, and diſpoſe me calmly to acquieſce in thy wiſe and good Pleaſure.

Chriſt.] Alas! my Son, eager and greedy Men covet they know not what. An Object at a diſtance engages their Deſires, while they ſee only the fair and glittering Side; but upon cloſer and more diſtinct View, Enjoyment undeceives them: and they grow ſick, even of their own Deſires; for their Deſires are various and mutable, and ever veering about to ſome freſh Object. It is therefore of ſome conſequence for a Man to forego his own Inclinations, even in Matters of no great Importance; But he who hath attained to the Faculty of doing this in any Caſe whatſoever, is truly free, and great, above the Reach and Envy of Fortune, and at the higheſt Pitch of Humane Perfection. Yet even this Man will find his Virtue called to the Teſt: For the old Enemy of Souls is ever framing ſome Stratagem, to undo good Men; and lies in Ambuſh Night and Day, to catch an Opportunity of enſnaring unwary Souls. Let then his Diligence provoke Yours, and be not leſs aſſiduous to ſave, than he is to deſtroy, you. For this is the Purport of thy Lord's Command; *Watch and Pray, that ye enter not into Temptation.*

Matth. xxvi.

CHAP.

Chap. XLV.

In Man dwelleth no good Thing.

Diſciple.] *Lord, what is Man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that thou viſiteſt him?* How can he deſerve to be aſſiſted by thy Grace, or ſucceeded by thy Favour? What Right have I, ſo vile a Wretch, much more, to complain unto my God, if he withdraw his Preſence, and leave me to my ſelf? Or if I beg and pray for Comforts, what have I to alledge in my own behalf, how can I take it ill if he reject my Petitions? This I am ſenſible is all I ought to think, or can pretend to ſay, That I have Nothing, and am Nothing, and in my own Nature tend to and purſue after Vanity and Nothing. A miſerable Creature, faint and feeble, incapable ſo much as of One good Deſire, till animated and ſtrengthned by Thee. Fickle and mutable, Subject to Infirmities innumerable, and perpetual Decays; But thou, my God, art *the ſame Yeſterday, and to Day and for ever*, ever happy, and juſt, and wiſe and good, and ordering all things for the beſt, after the Counſel of thy Divine Will. Well were it, if I were but equally diſpoſed to Good and Evil, but the Corruption of my Nature, alas! preponderates ſtrongly to Vanity and Vice; I eaſily fall from my own Stedfaſtneſs, and am carried about with every ſhifting Wind of Time, and Chance, and Paſſion.

Pſalm viii.

Heb. xiii.

And yet, thus weak and veering as I am, thy helping Hand can comfort and confirm me. Thy powerful Grace, without any Humane Aids, can work Wonders in me; ſtrengthen my Reſolutions, ſcatter my Fears, and fill my Soul with Reſt and ſweet Content. If, when I thirſt after higher Degrees of Virtue

tue and Devotion, or if I fly to thee for Succour in Diſtreſs, when all other Succours fail me, (and all but thine will and muſt prove ineffectual). If then I could but abandon all other Hopes, and repoſe my whole Confidence in thee alone; then might I entertain ſome Expectations of thy Favour; and wait with Joy for the cheerful Returns of Grace and Comfort from above. For all my Succeſſes are thy free Gift, and I my ſelf a deſpicable Wretch, not able to effect any good, not in a condition to merit the leaſt of all thy Mercies.

What therefore can I have to boaſt of, who, till I deſpiſe and go out of my ſelf, am not ſo much as qualified to receive Aſſiſtance from Thee? Or how can I deſire the Applauſe and Admiration of Men? What? Shall I pretend to glory of Weakneſs, and Inconſtancy, and Nothing? This were a Vanity beyond Example, an Extravagance beyond Imagination. How fooliſh and abſurd, nay how hurtful and deſtructive a Vice is Ambition, which, by undue Purſuit of Honour, robs us of true Honour, and, affecting Favour with Men, incurrs Puniſhment and Diſpleaſure from God? For He who labours to pleaſe himſelf, is ſure at the ſame time to offend Thee; and loſes true ſubſtantial Virtue, by coveting empty Praiſe. For true Honour and Virtue conſiſts in Glorying, not in our ſelves, but in Thee, O Lord; in Magnifying, not our own Attainments or Performances, but thy free Grace; and in loving and delighting in nothing, but ſo far only as may advance thy Honour.

Pſalm cxv. *Not unto me, therefore, not unto me, but unto thy Name be the Praiſe*; May Men commend and extol, not My Works, but Thy Power, which inſpired, produced, and perfected them: And may this Commendation devolve ſo entirely upon thy Grace, that not the leaſt part of it may fall upon my Concurrence with it. Far be it from me to arrogate any thing

thing to my ſelf; for while I rejoyce in thee, I find nothing in my ſelf to glory in, but my Infirmities: and in them I will gladly glory, becauſe the greater my Weakneſs is, the more viſible and eminent is thy Strength, which is ſo conſpicuouſly perfected in it. Let unbelieving *Jews ſeek Honour one of another*, but I, who profeſs my ſelf one of the Faithful, *will ſeek the Honour which cometh from God only*. For what is all the Fame, and Reſpect, and Greatneſs of this World, if put into the Balance with thy eternal Glory, but exquiſite Folly, deceitful Bubble, and altogether lighter than Vanity it ſelf? All Honour therefore, and Praiſe, all Might and Majeſty be aſcribed to thee, O bleſſed Trinity, my God, my Light, my Truth, my Succour and Defence, my Refuge and Comfort, for ever and ever. *Amen.* John v.

Chap. XLVI.

Of deſpiſing Worldly Honour.

Chriſt.] If thou ſeeſt Others grow great in Reputation and Preferment, while Thou art overlooked and deſpiſed, let this, my Son, be no Concern to thee. Look up to Me, and ſet thy Affections and Hopes in Heaven, and then the Neglect and Contempt of Men will give thee little Trouble.

Diſciple.] Were it not, Lord, for the Blindneſs and Corruption of Nature, which makes me fond of Vanities and Joys, I ſhould have juſter Notions of theſe Matters. For he, who rightly underſtands himſelf, cannot but diſcern, that it is not in the Power of any thing without to do him real Prejudice; and conſequently, that he can have no reaſonable Ground to complain of thy Providence, however it thinks fit to diſpoſe

diſpoſe of ſuch Matters. The Conſciouſneſs of my own Sins convinces me, I have deſerved, that all the Creatures ſhould conſpire and make War againſt me. To Me belongs Shame and Confuſion, but to Thee only Honour and Praiſe is due. And thou haſt taught me, that to bear Contempt, and Hatred, and barbarous Treatment with Humility and Patience, is the only Method of attaining inward Peace, and true Satisfaction; The Virtue which moſt recommend me to thy Favour; the beſt Prediſpoſition for Light and Grace; and the ſureſt, cloſeſt Band of Union with thy ſelf.

Chap. XLVII.

Happineſs is not to be had, by the Favour or Friendſhip of Men.

Chriſt.] He that propoſes to be happy, by the Affection or Acquaintance of the beſt, the greateſt Man alive, will always find his Mind unſettled and perplexed. For even the Beſt and Greateſt are but Mortals; and the effectual Remedy againſt immoderate Concern for their being taken away from thee, will be to court the Favour of an Eternal and Immortal Friend. Now the leſs Confidence any Man repoſes in any earthly Comfort, ſo much the more he ingratiates himſelf with God. And, the better he acquaints himſelf with his own Vileneſs, the leſs he is in his own Eyes, the higher he riſes in God's Eſteem. But they who vainly fancy any thing that is good or meritorious in themſelves, put an effectual Bar to Divine Grace. For This is given to the Humble, and the Spirit of God chooſes the contrite Heart for the place of his peculiar Reſidence. Would'ſt thou abandon

don Self-conceit, and wean thy Heart from all Fondneſs for the Creatures, it is not to be imagined what Comforts, what overflowing Joys I would infuſe into thy Soul. But while theſe employ thy Thoughts and Deſires, thou art diverted from all higher Objects, and by being too intent upon his Works, loſeſt and forgetteſt the Almighty Maker. Learn then to ſubdue thy own Will, that thou may'ſt clearly underſtand, and readily comply with mine. For any other Object, though never ſo trifling and inconſiderable in its own nature, yet, if unduly prized, and immoderately loved, corrupts the Mind, and checks its Aſpirings after the Chief, the Only Good.

Chap. XLVIII.

Againſt vain, and pompous Learning.

Chriſt.] DO not, my Son, ſuppoſe, that the Excellence of a Man conſiſts in Subtlety of Wit, or Quaintneſs of Expreſſion: For the Kingdom of God does not lye in Elegance of Speech, or Fineneſs of Parts, but in Innocence of Life and Good Works. Let my Words be thy principal Study; for theſe awaken Attention, enlighten the Underſtanding, kindle a holy Zeal, provoke true Contrition, and heal the Wounds they make, with the Spiritual Balm of Grace and Solid Comfort. Let not the growing Wiſer and more Learned be the End thou propoſeſt to thy ſelf in Reading; but read, that thou may'ſt be qualified to practice, and let thy Knowledge be ſeen by ſubduing thy Vices and Paſſions. For this is Improvement indeed, and will turn to better Account, than the niceſt and moſt diſtinguiſhing Skill, in all the Controverſies and difficult Points, that ever employed the

the Tongues and Pens of wrangling Logicians, Philosophers, and Divines. And when thou haſt run through the whole Compaſs of Learning, yet all will turn at laſt upon one ſingle Point; and the whole Profit of thy Pains lyes in a narrow room.

If thou wilt be knowing indeed, learn of Me; for I am the only Maſter that teach Men Knowledge; I give more perfect, more ſublime Underſtanding to Babes, to the Humble and Sincere, than all the celebrated Sons of Art have ever been able to do: And thoſe whom I inſtruct grow truly wiſe, are preſently enlightned and refined, and by an aſtoniſhing Proficience in Virtue, outſtrip all the admired Schemes of Morality. Moſt wretched are thoſe vain Men, who with infinite Toil and Time, lay themſelves out upon the unprofitable Curioſities of Humane Wiſdom, and take no Pains to inform themſelves in their Duty to Me. The Hour, alas! draws on apace, when their Maſter Chriſt ſhall come with terrible Pomp, and call each Man to ſtrict Account, and ſound every Conſcience to the bottom. Then *ſhall Jeruſalem be ſearched with Candles*, then ſhall the hidden things of Darkneſs be brought to light; and no Man's Eloquence or Subtlety of Arguing ſhall do him any Service before that All-ſeeing Judge. I raiſe the Meek, and Man of mean Senſe, in an inſtant, and teach him at once the Grounds of Eternal Truths, better than a Courſe of many Years ſpent in laborious Study, and the moſt exquiſite Methods of Schools and Univerſities. I bring Men to right Apprehenſions of Things without any Noiſe of Words, without the Formality of Syſtems, or vain Oſtentations of cavilling Sophiſtry, or regular Diſputing. Of Me alone Men learn to deſpiſe the World, to think things preſent below their Pains and Care, to love and ſeek thoſe that are heavenly and eternal; to decline Honours, to bear Injuries and Affronts, to truſt

Zeph. i.

truſt and hope in me alone, and to wiſh for nothing but my Favour, and to *eſteem all things but Droſs and Dung, ſo they may win Chriſt.* Phil. iii.

Some Diſciples of mine have made ſuch wonderful Improvements under me, as even to ſpeak things above Humane Comprehenſion; and grow wiſer in Solitude and Cloyſters, than any Converſation of learned Men, or Volumes and Libraries never ſo carefully peruſed, could have made them. But this is not every Man's caſe; for I do not communicate to all alike. Some I inſtruct in common Matters, others in abſtruſe and peculiar Notions; And, as the Meaſure and Quality of the Matter, ſo the Manner of Imparting it, is very different. To Some I ſhew my ſelf in Figures and Parables, Dreams and myſtick Repreſentations; to Others I reveal the moſt important Secrets in the moſt clear intelligible Method. Books ſpeak alike to all, but all are not qualified to be taught by them alike. But I, inſtead of dead Letters preſented to the outward Senſes, perform my Buſineſs within. I fill the Mind with Truth, ſute my ſelf to each Man's Genius and Capacity, ſearch every Corner of the Heart, underſtand their moſt retired Thoughts, inſpire good Deſires, promote and finiſh thoſe Deſires by bringing them to Action, and deal to every one the various Gifts of my Spirit, in ſuch kinds and proportions, as I ſee moſt uſeful and ſeaſonable.

Chap. XLIX.

Of Meddling with the World, as little as may be.

Chriſt.] IN many things, my Son, content thy ſelf with being ignorant, and chooſe to live as a Man dead, while among the Living; One, whoſe Thoughts and Affections are crucified to all the World; and all the World to Them. Many things are to be overlook'd, as if you ſaw them not: Thy Mind drawn off from the diſtracting Variety of Objects, and faſtened cloſe down to the things that make for thy Peace and Salvation. In controverted Points, 'tis generally much better to content one's ſelf with avoiding erroneous Opinions and their vicious Conſequences, and leave others to abound in their own Senſe, (where their Difference from thee does not apparently hazard their Souls,) than to engage in hot Diſputes, and ſpend thy precious Hours in Wrangling and fierce Contention. And even in Diſputes, not to be Hot and Pertinacious; for if God and Truth be on thy ſide, and thou canſt with comfort appeal to thy Judge above, thy Concern will not be great for Victory and Approbation below.

Diſciple.] Alas! Lord, what a wretched Caſe is this World in? How diſtant from this meek, and abſtracted Temper of Mind! Trifling Loſs is ſeriouſly lamented. A little ſordid Gain, engages Mens Time, and Labour, and Thoughts. The Day is too ſhort for their vigorous Purſuits, and anxious Cares break their Sleep; while all their Spiritual Concerns lye neglected and forgotten. Their Diligence and Study is determined to Matters of ſmall or no Importance; and the One thing Neceſſary is laid aſide, as if it were not worth a ſingle Thought. So vain is Man, ſo totally immers'd in ſenſible Objects and worldly Cares; and

ſo

ſo contentedly does he periſh in Vanity and Vexation, unleſs thy Grace make him wiſer, and raiſe his Mind to better and eternal Concerns.

Chap. L.

Againſt a fond and eaſie Credulity.

Diſciple.] *Lord, be thou my Help in Trouble, for vain is the Help of Man.* Pſalm cviii. How often have I fail'd of Succour, and true Friendſhip, where I had moſt reaſon to expect it? How often found it, where I entertained no ſuch Expectations? So vain and uncertain is all Truſt in Man, ſo entirely does the Safety of Good Men depend upon Thee alone. Bleſſed therefore, and for ever admired, be that good Providence, which orders and diſpoſes all Events, to thy impotent and fickle, thy ignorant and ſilly, thy deceitful and deceivable Creatures!

Who among all the Sons of Men ever behaved himſelf with ſo prudent Care, and exact Circumſpection, as not ſometimes to be over-reached by Treachery and Trick, and involved in Difficultes and Troubles, which the moſt jealous Foreſight knew not how to deſcry or ſuſpect? But He, who places no Confidence in Humane Subtlety, and reſts in God alone, and acts with downwright Honeſty and a good Conſcience, is leſs ſubject to ſuch Inconvenience than cunning and intriguing Men: Or, if he be ſurpriſed and impoſed upon, yet is his Deliverance generally more ſpeedy and effectual, and his Comforts in the mean while more ſenſible and ſupporting; for thou, Lord, never forſakeſt thoſe utterly, who put their Truſt in Thee. A faithful Friend, and ſuch as will ſtand by us in Adverſity and Want, is exceeding hard to be found; but

Thou art always the ſame, and no change of Circumſtances can change Thee, or abate thy Affection. Happy is the Soul that is built upon the Rock, Chriſt; Were this my Caſe, the Fear of the Malicious would not diſtract, nor the Calumnies of the Envious diſturb me.

But who can foreſee all future Inconveniences, or prevent all that he may foreſee? And, if the Ills we are aware of, and provide againſt, are ſo grievous to be born; how much more heavy will be thoſe Wounds, whoſe Smart and Terrour are doubled by Surpriſe? We often blame our ſelves for not being wiſer, and have reaſon to condemn our too eaſie Credulity; That eſpecially, which greedily aſſents to the Flatteries and Commendations of Men, and relies upon their mighty Profeſſions of Friendſhip and Eſteem. For, though they call and think us Angels, yet we cannot but be conſcious to our ſelves, that we are no better than Men, frail and wretched Men. Whom therefore ſhall I believe? Whom indeed but Thee, O Lord? For thou art Truth it ſelf, incapable of deceiving or of being deceived. But as for Men, they are all Lyars, weak and inconſtant, frail and treacherous; eſpecially in what they ſay, ſo exceeding fabulous and vain, that it is a Point of Prudence to ſuſpend our Faith, and thou haſt wiſely taught us to beware of their falſe Inſinuations. Thou haſt forewarned us of their Treachery and Malice, told us, that a Man's *Enemies ſhall be thoſe of his own Kindred and Houſhold*; and that when *Men ſay, Lo, Chriſt is here, or lo, he is there, we ought not to believe them.* The Truth of theſe Predictions I have learnt by ſad Experience, and wiſh I may grow wiſer at my own Expence.

Pſal. cxvi.

Matth. xxiv.

Be ſure, (ſays one) you keep this private which I tell you; and yet that very Man in the next Company divulges what he had imparted juſt before, under the

the Seal of Secreſie. From ſuch unſincere Dealers as theſe I beg to be delivered, and from their treacherous Ways, that I may neither come within their power of betraying and abuſing my Confidence; nor injure any who repoſe the like in Me. Make me then, Lord, a rigid Obſerver of Truth, and religiouſly firm to my Word: for what I cannot but reſent, when done to Me, it never can become me to put upon any other Perſon. Silence indeed, and forbearing to concern one's ſelf in the Affairs of our Neighbours, is not only a Virtue, but a Convenience and Benefit. Caution in Crediting, Reſerve in Speaking, and Revealing one's ſelf to very few, are the beſt Securities both of Peace and a good Underſtanding with the World, and of the inward Peace of our own Minds. Endeavouring to approve our ſelves to the Knower and Searcher of Hearts, and not ſuffering every Blaſt of idle Report or empty Profeſſion to carry us about, but guarding our Converſation carefully, and labouring to conform every Thought, Word, and Action, to the Divine Will; Theſe are a good Man's Safety, and Satisfaction, and Wiſdom. How ſure and calm a Retreat does that Man make, who chooſes to preſerve thy Favour, by making an Eſcape from Pomp and Noiſe; preferring thy Approbation before the loudeſt Fame and Applauſe; and willingly abandoning thoſe painted Follies, whoſe glittering Outſides impoſe upon our Senſes? Who prefers contrite Sorrow, ſevere Virtue, and ſolitary Devotion, before the ſhowy Pleaſures of the World, or that empty Admiration which Ambition and Vain-glory affect. Praiſe is indeed the Conſequence and Encouragement of Virtue, but it is ſometimes ſo unſeaſonably applied, as to become its Bane and Corruption too. For the whole Life of Man is one continued Temptation, and we have a ſubtle Adverſary to deal with, who ſlips no advantage of undoing us. Our Praiſes he improves to his own Pur-

poſes, by ſwelling us up with them into Pride and Self-conceit. And many Souls have periſhed by that Virtue, publiſhed and celebrated, which, if unknown and unobſerved, had come to mighty Perfection, and been infinitely Happy by the advantage of Secrecy and Silence.

Chap. LI.

Of Truſting in God, when Men ſpeak Ill of us.

Chriſt.] STand faſt, *my Son*, and be not terrified with the Shock of Calumny and Reproach, but let me be thy Refuge and ſure Confidence. Alas! What are Words but empty Sounds, that break and ſcatter in the Air, and make no real Impreſſion? If not Report alone, but thy own Conſcience too reproach thee, bewail thy Guilt, and reform what hath been amiſs. But if upon examination thou find no Ground of accuſing thy ſelf, ſtrengthen thy Mind in Innocence, look upon this wrongful Judgment, as a Suffering for God's ſake, and bear it accordingly with Patience and Contentedneſs. He expects that thou *ſhould'ſt even reſiſt unto Blood*, when called to it: But how will the Man be able to endure Wounds and Blows, who is not yet a Match for Words and Affronts? Enquire a little into the true Grounds of ſuch Impatience, and thou ſhalt find it a Symptom of a Soul ſick and indiſpoſed. For how can it be otherwiſe accounted for, than, that thou art yet Carnal, and retaineſt a greater Regard for the Opinion of Men, than can be well conſiſtent with a Perſon, who hath renounced the World, and profeſſes to dedicate himſelf entirely to God. Whence is Reproof ſo grating, and

Heb. xii.

and uneaſie? Whence that ſollicitous Care to contrive Excuſes? Whence that forward Zeal in thy own Vindication, if not from a Dread and Abhorrence of that Contempt, to which thy ſuppoſed Miſcarriages would expoſe thee? Fondneſs of Honour and Reputation lyes at the bottom, and an inordinate Deſire to recommend thy ſelf to Man's Eſteem. Which ſhews, thou art not yet ſo humble, ſo reſigned, but that a Principle of Vanity lurks ſtill within; nor is the World yet dead to Thee, or Thou to the World.

Attend diligently to my Inſtructions, and the Cenſures of ten thouſand Men will not be able to diſturb thee. Let them proceed in their Envy and Malice, and blacken thy Name after the moſt ſpiteful manner, that Hell it ſelf can practice or invent, yet what art thou the worſe? Can all this change thy Perſon? Or hath thy Head one Hair the leſs for it? Do but compoſe thy Mind, and reſolve to deſpiſe it, and all blows over. Theſe Scandals vaniſh and fly away like Motes in the Sun, and are neither more nor leſs than what Reſentment makes them. To be provoked with every ſlanderous Word argues a Littleneſs of Soul, a Want of due Regard for God; But the brave generous Mind, whoſe All is in God, and who refers himſelf entirely to his Judgment, is above the Terrors and Diſcouragements of Men, and lays no ſtreſs upon their Notions of Things. For their Notions are frequently Raſh and Falſe, they ſeldom do, and ſometimes cannot, enter into the real Merits of the Cauſe; but to Me all Hearts are open, and from my piercing Eyes no Secrets are hid. I know diſtinctly, both in what Manner, and with what Intention every thing is done. The Perſon who receives, and does, the Wrong, are both under my Cognizance; and even the Wrong it ſelf is done by my Permiſſion; that by this Means the Thoughts of many Hearts may be revealed. I ſhall not fail to make a juſt and clear Deciſion

between the Guilty and the Innocent; and call both to account hereafter; However I may think fit to try them in the mean while, and keep thoſe things in the dark at preſent, which then ſhall be notorious to all the World. And what Miſtakes ſoever may prevail now, my Judgment will be according to Equity and Truth, and my Sentence, once pronounced, can never be revers'd. Few indeed are capable of diſcerning the Juſtice of my Providence, in ſuffering Innocent Men to be traduced, and their honeſt Actions miſunderſtood. But I do nothing without wiſe Reaſons, and neither am, nor can be, miſtaken in my Methods, how-much-ſoever ſhort-ſighted and inconſiderate Men are confounded about them.

Appeal then in all theſe Caſes to My Determination, and let thy Matters reſt ſo fully there, as not only to diſregard what others think concerning thee, but even in ſome meaſure to diſtruſt thy own Judgment concerning thy ſelf. Conſider, that I think many things fit for my Servants, which they can by no means imagine convenient for themſelves. This very Reflection preſerves a Good Man's Temper, in every Accident of Life; becauſe he knows that every Accident falls out thus by my direction. This buoys his Spirits up, againſt the Inſults and Injuries of Calumny and Detraction; and keeps them from ſwelling into Pride and immoderate Joy, when his Innocence is cleared, and his Virtue commended. He knows, that God ſees not as Man ſees, for Man judges according to outward and fallible Appearances, but God ſearches the Reins and the Heart, and judges righteous Judgment.

Pſalm vii. *Diſciple.*] O Lord, thou *righteous Judge, ſtrong and patient*, who underſtandeſt the Frailty, and the Wickedneſs of Men, be thou my ſtrong Rock, my Truſt and Defence; For even in my own Conſcience I dare not be too confident; ſince many

many things, which to Me are either unknown or forgotten, thou haſt a perfect Knowledge and exact Remembrance of. I ought therefore in all Reproofs and Reproaches to ſubmit with Patience, even *though my Heart, condemn me not*, becauſe thou, who permitteſt theſe things, *art greater than my Heart, and knoweſt all things.* Thus Reaſon and Religion both convince me I ought to behave my ſelf; but if at any time Paſſion and Frailty have exceeded in too nice and tender a Senſe of theſe Things, pardon, I beſeech thee, what is paſt, and enable me to be more reſigned for the time to come. Thy Mercy alone will avail me more than all my laboured Excuſes; and Pardon is what I rather chooſe, than the moſt confident Teſtimony of my own Conſcience. For though *I ſhould know nothing by my ſelf, yet am I not hereby juſtified*; For *he that judgeth me is the Lord.* The Lord, who will one Day *bring to light the hidden things of diſhoneſty*, even thoſe which have eſcaped the Committer's own obſervation. And therefore *if thou, Lord, ſhould'ſt be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, no Fleſh living could be juſtified in thy ſight.*

1 John iii.

1 Cor. iv.

Pſal. cxxx. 3. Pſal. cxliii. 2.

Chap. LII.

Nothing too much to ſuffer for Eternal Life.

Chriſt.] Let not, my Son, thy Labours or Sufferings for Me and thy Duty, or any other ſort of Hardſhip or Tribulation in this World, ſo far damp thy Courage; but that my Promiſe ſtill ſhould be a ſure Anchor-hold of Hope, and this Reflection ever miniſter Comfort, that I am able to recompence thee, not only beyond what is reaſonable to expect,

expect, but even poſſible for thee to wiſh or imagine. Thy Toils will not continue very long, nor will thy Pain and Trouble always torment thee. Wait but a little longer, and look forward, and ſee how glorious a Proſpect opens it ſelf, How ſwiftly the End of all thy Sufferings approaches; and how ſuddenly Sorrow and Tumult vaniſh away. Even Time it ſelf is not of everlaſting continuance; but that which is bounded within ſo very narrow a Space, as this ſhort Span of Life, cannot in any fair Computation be counted long, or great. Proceed then in thy Duty with Vigour and undaunted Reſolution; ply thy Work hard in my Vineyard, and fill the Station I have appointed thee to; Thy Wages are certain and valuable, for I my ſelf will *be thy exceeding great Reward.*

Gen. xvii.

Perſiſt in Writing, in Reading, in Singing my Praiſes, in Lamenting thy own Sins, in ſilent Meditation, in devout Prayer, in Fortitude and Patience; for the things prepared for them that love God are richly worth theſe and greater Conflicts; All thou muſt do, all thou canſt ſuffer, are in no degree worthy to be compared to them. The Day is coming, and fix'd in my unalterable Decree, adorned with the Triumphs of Joy and Peace; That mighty Revolution, when theſe alternate Succeſſions of Day and Night ſhall ceaſe; and everlaſting uninterrupted Light ſhall ſhine for ever; there ſhall be Luſtre infinite, Satisfactions unbroken, unconceivable, Reſt eternal, and above the Power of any future Danger. There ſhall be then no place left for that melancholy Wiſh; *O that thou would'ſt deliver me from the Body of this Death*; no occaſion for that Complaint, *Wo is me, that I am conſtrained to dwell with Meſech, and to have my Habitation in this barren Wilderneſs.* For even *the laſt Enemy* ſhall be ſubdued, *and Death it ſelf deſtroyed.* Salvation then and

Rom. vii.

Pſal. cxx.

1 Cor. xv.

and Life ſhall reign for ever; Sorrow and Anguiſh, Sighs and Tears ſhall flee away; a Crown of Rejoycing put upon every Head, and thou ſhalt be happy in the ſweet Society *of Saints and Angels, the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, and the Aſſembly of the Firſt-born.* Hebr. xii.

O! could'ſt thou now but ſee the Heavens open, and with the ken of mortal Eye behold the bright and everlaſting Crowns of my Choſen; Were thy Heart large enough to admit a juſt Idea of Their Trophies and Glories, whom once the World deſpiſed, and thought not worthy to live upon the Earth; thou then would'ſt gladly embrace their Sufferings and Reproaches, abandon all thy vain Deſires of worldly Greatneſs; and diſdain the periſhing Pleaſures of the preſent Life. Humility and Patience would then appear in all their native Beauties; and even Affliction and Ignominy diſplay ſuch Charms, as muſt attract thy Love, and make thee eſteem the Reproaches of Chriſt, greater Treaſures and Gain, than all the Majeſty and Honour and moſt celebrated Reputation that a mortal State is capable of.

Attend then ſeriouſly to theſe important Truths, for They, if conſidered and believed in good earneſt, will ſtop thy Mouth, and effectually ſilence all thy Complaints. For ſure the Sufferings of a Moment cannot be thought too dear a Price for Eternal Happineſs in exchange. Surely the Kingdom of God is no trifling Concern; And when the loſing or attaining this lyes before thee, Nothing can be too much to prevent that loſs; Nothing a hard Bargain for that infinite Advantage. Grovel then upon the Earth no longer, but ſtand erect, and lift thy Eyes and Heart to Heaven. See there the bleſſed Effects, the mighty Succeſs of all thoſe ſharp Conflicts, which my Saints, while in the Body underwent; the End of all their Tryals, and Adverſities, their painful Severities and pious Labours.

bours. Theſe mortified, afflicted Men, once reputed the *Filth of the World, and the Off-ſcouring of all Things*, the common Mark of Inſolence and Malice, are now in perfect Joy; their Sorrows ſwallowed up in tranſporting Bliſs and Comfort, their Dangers changed into ſecure Peace; their Labours into Eaſe and ſweet Repoſe; their Perſecutions, and wrongful Accuſations before the Bar of Men, into Thrones of Glory, where they ſit and judge the World, and live, and rejoyce, and reign with me for ever.

1 Cor. iv.

Chap. LIII.

The Joys of Eternity, and Miſeries of this preſent Life.

Diſciple.] O Bleſſed Manſions of the heavenly City! O bright and glorious Day of eternal Light and Bliſs! A Day, that never declines, a Sun, that never ſets, nor is obſcured by any ſucceeding Night; but a State always chearful, always fix'd, and ſecured from Change and Sorrow, from Danger and Decay. How do I pant and thirſt after that happy Hour, when this bleſſed Morning ſhall dawn and ſhed its Beams, and with a wondrous Luſtre put an end to all the Darkneſs and Miſeries of Mortality? It does indeed already ſhine in the Hearts and Hopes of thoſe good Men, whoſe Converſation is even now in Heaven: But even Theirs is but a diſtant Proſpect, and ſuch as, while they Sojourn here, preſents things only in a Glaſs. The Citizens and Inhabitants of thoſe bleſs'd Regions ſee it with their naked Eye, they feel and enjoy its Sweetneſs, and are all enlightned with its Rays; while the diſtreſſed Sons of

Eve

Eve endure and groan under their Exile, and cannot but lament the Bitterneſs of this imperfect gloomy Day, which Men on Earth call Evil. A Day but ſhort, and, which is worſe, diſmal and uncomfortable. For who can worthily expreſs the Pains, the Perplexities of Body and Soul, which are the neceſſary, the inſeparable Incumbrances of Man's preſent Condition? A Condition, wherein he is polluted with ſo many Sins, entangled in ſo many Difficulties, beſet with ſo many Misfortunes, oppreſs'd with ſo many Fears, diſtracted with ſo many Cares, diſturbed and diverted from his main Concern by ſo many Impertinencies, deluded with ſo many Vanities, confounded with ſo many Errors, waſted and worn out with ſo much Labour and Trouble; aſſaulted by Temptations, emaſculated by Pleaſures, and tormented with great variety of Neceſſities and Wants?

O! when will there be an End of this ſo complicated Miſery? When may I hope to be enlarged and releaſed from this Bondage of Sin? When ſhall my Thoughts and Deſires center, and be for ever fix'd, in Thee, my God, alone? When may I hope to attain true Joy in Thee, without any Allay of bodily Suffering, without any Diſtraction of Mind? When ſhall I reſt in firm untroubled Peace; Peace from Accidents and Temptations without, Peace from Guilt and Miſgiving, from the Solicitations of Luſt, and the Violence of Paſſion, within? When ſhall I ſee my Jeſus Face to Face, and contemplate the Beauties of his Kingdom and glorious Godhead? When will my deareſt Saviour be my All in All, and receive me to thoſe bliſsful Habitations, prepared for them that love him, and that are loved by him, before the Foundation of the World?

Behold! I am here Deſolate and Poor, a Stranger and Alone in an Enemy's Country; where Wars rage and never ceaſe, and terrible Diſtreſſes come thick and

and ſtrong upon me every Day and Hour. Be Thou my Comfort in this exiled and deſolate Condition; Aſſwage my Pain, and incline thy Favour to thy Servant, whoſe parched and languiſhing Soul *gaſpeth unto thee as a thirſty Land.* Thou only art able to do this; For, what the miſtaken World calls Comforts, are but ſo many freſh Additions to my Burden. I long moſt earneſtly to enjoy, but cannot yet attain, my Wiſh. Fain would I graſp and cling to heavenly things, but am detained and faſtened down to Earth, by Vanities below, and unmortified Affections. My Mind labours to get above theſe, but even, when the Spirit is willing, I find the Fleſh extreamly weak, and my ſenſual, prevails over my better and heavenly, Inclinations.

Pſalm cxliii.

Thus am I, wretched Man, involved in a perpetual War, and live in Contradiction to my ſelf; my own Hindrance and Torment, moving different Ways, and purſuing different Ends and Proſpects at one and the ſame time. How great is my Concern and Conflict, when I ſet my Mind to Meditate and Pray, and, in the midſt of this Exerciſe, am interrupted by a Clutter of worldly and carnal Imaginations crouding in upon me? *Go not far from me, O my God, neither caſt away thy Servant in Diſpleaſure.* Scatter theſe dark and gloomy Clouds, which intercept my Viſion of thee, by the Brightneſs of thy Lightning; thunder upon them from Heaven, *caſt out thine Arrows and diſcomfit them.* Recollect my broken and ſcattered Thoughts, help me to forget the Things of this World, to reject, and deſpiſe, and effectually drive away, all ſinful Imaginations. Aſſiſt me, thou ſubſtantial Truth, and root me faſt, that no blaſt of Vanity may ſhake and unſettle my Heart. Diffuſe thy heavenly Sweetneſs through my Soul, and chaſe away all nauſeous, unſavoury, and impure Affections, for theſe cannot ſtand before thee.

Pſal. cxliv.

Par-

Particularly, dearest Lord, I implore thy Compassion upon my Infirmities; and in thy Mercy impute not to me, my many wandring Thoughts in Prayer. For there, I must confess, my Distractions are great and frequent; and I am often least of all in that Place, where I stand or kneel: Thus, while my Body is before thy Foot-stool, my Mind is carried away I know not whither. And This is a very melancholy Reflection, such as gives me occasion to suspect, and deeply bewail, my self. Since where my Thoughts are, there properly and indeed am I; and where my Thoughts frequent, and delight to dwell, there without doubt is the Object of my Affection and Concern: and that which either natural Disposition or long Custom renders most delightful, that to be sure is most familiar, and comes continually uppermost. All this I gather from that Observation, which thou, Eternal Truth, hast left us, that *Where our Treasure is, there will our Hearts be also.* Matth. vi.

This then is the Rule, by which I try and sound the Bent of my Heart. If I love Heaven, the Thoughts of it will be frequent and pleasant to me. But if I love the World, the Effect of this will be, that I shall feel Excess of Joy in prosperous Events, and be as immoderate in my Grief for those that are otherwise. If I love the Flesh, wanton and carnal Imaginations will often return upon me, and be entertained with Satisfaction; but if I love the Spirit, then shall I find in Spiritual Objects a grateful Relish, and dwell upon them with true Delight. For this my own Senses and Experience assure me, that what I love most I am best pleased to be entertained with, greediest to hear, and forwardest to talk of, most careful to remember, and to preserve deep and lasting Impressions of upon my Mind. And therefore, though I cannot attain to it so fully as I wish and strive, yet I can plainly perceive, and do truly value and admire the Happiness of

of Them, who can abandon all, and ſtick to Thee alone; that commit a holy Violence upon their natural Inclinations, crucifie the Fleſh, and, with a pure bright Zeal, and a clear Conſcience, can offer holy, fervent Prayers, a ſpiritual and unblemiſhed Sacrifice: Where All without are forbidden entrance, and all within is compoſed, Theſe Men, ſo firmly intent upon Thee and their Devotions, are fit to praiſe thee with thoſe Angels, whoſe refined Excellencies they ſo happily aſpire after, and to whoſe bleſſed Society thou wilt one Day exalt and admit them.

CHAP. LIV.

Of the Deſire of Eternal Life, and the Happineſs of Them who ſtrive manfully.

Chriſt.] MY Son, when thou feeleſt thy Soul inflamed with an eager Deſire of Eternal Happineſs, and thinkeſt long to be releaſed from this Priſon of the Body, that thou may'ſt be bleſſed with a nearer and more diſtinct View, a perfect, full, and uninterrupted Fruition, of my Brightneſs and Majeſty; ſet open all the Avenues of thy Soul, and greedily receive the holy Inſpiration. Expreſs thy humbleſt Thanks to God, and be duly ſenſible of his Goodneſs, who deals ſo bountifully with thee, viſits thee with his Mercy, ſupports and ſtrengthens thee with his Grace, and raiſes thoſe Affections up to Heaven, which have a fatal innate Tendency to immerſe thy Soul in Earth, and Fleſh, and Senſe. For, do not miſtake the Matter, no Reaſonings or Endeavours of thy own have power to effect ſo good a Work, or to create thoſe Spiritual Inclinations; The Finger of God is in them, and they are owing to no leſs

leſs noble a Cauſe, than the free and bountiful Donation of Divine Grace and Favour: The deſign of which is to advance and exalt thy Virtues, to make thee Humble and Modeſt with Reflections upon the Strength of Another made Perfect in thy Weakneſs; to fit thee for future Tryals and ſorer Conflicts, to engage thy Affections, and encourage thy Perſeverance, in the faithful Service of ſo gracious, ſo good a Maſter.

Nor let thy Spirits be dejected, Son, if this be not done with all that Zeal, and entire Reſignation of a Heart perfectly undivided, which thou could'ſt wiſh. For, as in common Fire there will always be ſome Smoak; ſo in theſe holy Flames many Men are ſincerely deſirous of heavenly Things, who yet cannot quite deveſt themſelves of carnal Affections, nor be abſolutely free from all Temptations. And therefore ſome other Proſpects will often interpoſe, as well as that of promoting God's Glory only, by thoſe good Actions, for which the Aſſiſtances of his Grace are ſought and earneſtly implored. Of this thy own Experience convinces thee, by ſundry Inſtances, in which thou ſeeſt no reaſon to ſuſpect thy own Integrity. Nor will all that be condemned at the laſt Day, which was attempted with a mixture of ſome Deſire to promote thy own Advantage. Only take care, that this Deſire prevail not ſo far, as to encline thee to prefer what may contribute to thy Profit or Delight, before thoſe Things which will procure my Favour and Acceptance, and be for Mine and for Religion's Honour. For, with a wiſe conſiderate Chriſtian, my Will takes place above his own Deſires, or any the moſt inviting Object; and if it reign not in his Heart alone, yet it always ſits ſupreme, and over-rules the reſt. *I know all thy Deſires and thy Groanings are not hid from me.* Pſal. xxxviii. Thou would'ſt this Inſtant be admitted into the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God; The bliſsful and eternal Manſions of thy heavenly

Father's Houſe are thy longing and delight; and *as the Hart panteth after the Water-ſprings, ſo doth thy Soul pant and thirſt after me.* Pſal. xlii. But as yet thou art not ripe for theſe Joys; That happy Hour is not yet come; for this Life is the time of Warfare, and Action and Tryal and not of Reſt and Joy and Triumph. And thou muſt be content to wait with Patience, till the Kingdom of God ſhall come in perfection.

The Condition of Mortals upon Earth is that Exerciſe and Diſcipline; the Joys they feel are Comforts and Supports, not full and perfect Happineſs; they are given not to ſatisfie, but only to ſuſtain, them. And therefore receive them as they are, and uſe them to their proper Purpoſes, that by Them thy Conſtancy and Patience may be preſerved from ſinking under the weight of any Difficulties, which either the doing or ſuffering things, to which frail and corrupt Nature is averſe, may at any time expoſe thee. For the Change of a Man's ſelf is a very laborious Undertaking, and yet this muſt be done. The Fleſh with its Luſts muſt be crucified, a new Heart and a new Spirit introduced, many things done which offer violence to a Man's Inclinations, many foregone and let alone, to which he is ſtrongly diſpoſed. Others thou ſhalt often obſerve crowned with Succeſs, when thy own no leſs painful Endeavours are defeated and diſappointed: Others lookt upon as Oracles, when thy better and wiſer Advice is diſregarded and deſpiſed: Others will ſuffer long, and at laſt obtain their deſire, Thou perhaps, though equally patient, equally fervent and zealous in thy Application, diſmiſt with a repulſe; Others be great in Fame and general Eſteem, while thy more deſerving Virtues are paſs'd over in Silence; Others careſſed, preferr'd, truſted in Matters of Conſequence, and looked upon as uſeful and neceſſary; while thou art reputed a uſeleſs and inſignificant Perſon. Theſe miſtaken or partial Judgments of Men will grate hard upon

upon Humane Nature; but even These will turn to good account, if born with Meekneſs, and Modeſty, and Silence. For theſe are the very Methods, by which God brings the Fidelity of his Servants to the Touch; 'tis thus, that he diſcovers, whether they have gained a Conqueſt over Nature and Themſelves. And no ſort of Mortification is of happier conſequence, than that, which expoſes Men to the ſight and ſuffering of things, to which their own Minds are moſt violently averſe; eſpecially, when what they cannot but conceive moſt unfit, moſt abſurd and odd, conſtrains them to go againſt their own Senſe, and ſubmit to a higher Power, without any reſerve to the private Judgment of their own Reaſon in the Caſe. This is indeed hard, and a Perfection of Submiſſion not eaſie to be compaſs'd; but did Men but conſider, how vaſt the Advantages of a Temper ſo reſigned are at preſent, how glorious the Reward of it hereafter, and how quickly the Troubles it expoſes them to will end in that Reward, the Comforts of ſuch Diſcipline would be ſenſible and great, and they would even enjoy their Afflictions and Temptations, ſuſtained with ſo ſure, ſo bright a Proſpect, of the mighty, the approaching Recompence.

For this ſhort empty Pleaſure, which now thou chooſeſt for my ſake to decline, ſhall be compenſated with ſolid and everlaſting Joy in Heaven: And there thy largeſt Wiſhes ſhall be gratified; there ſhall be plenty of every thing that is good, Fruition perfect and ſecure, free from the leaſt Allay of Fear or Poſſibility of future Loſſes; Between thy Will and mine ſhall then be perfect Harmony; No Oppoſition there, No Obſtruction; But every thing ſhall conſpire to fulfil all thy Heart's deſire, and render thy Happineſs as exquiſite, as a finite Nature is capable of. Thy preſent Ignominy born with Patience, ſhall there be paid with brighter Glory; Thy Mourning Weeds exchanged for Robes

of Light and Joy; and He who ſits here in the loweſt Place, ſhall there be ſeated on an Eternal Throne. Let it not then be grievous to thee, to humble and ſubmit thy ſelf to the capricious Humours of Men, with whom thou converſeſt in this World: But rather ſo compoſe thy Mind, and order all thy Actions, as readily and meekly to comply with the Commands of thy Superiours, the Deſires of thy Equals, the Requeſts of thy Inferiours; to do for All what lawfully thou may'ſt, and to endure patiently whatever they ſhall, but ought not to, do to thee. Let vain Men purſue Vanity; leave them to their own Methods; let Them place their Glory and Happineſs in ſuch Objects, as their own miſtaken Judgments ſhall determine them to; let Them admire, and above all things covet, a celebrated Name and popular Applauſe; but do Thou place thy Excellence and Honour, in the Contempt of thy ſelf, thy Diligence in diſcharging my Commands, thy Zeal in ſeeking and advancing my Honour and Kingdom; and let this be firſt, and chief in thy Deſires, That *whether thou live, thou may'ſt live unto the Lord, or whether thou dye, thou may'ſt dye unto the Lord, that whether by Life or Death the Lord Jeſus may be magnified in thy Body.*

Rom. xiv.

Phil. i. 20.

Chap. LV.

An Act of Reſignation to God in time of Adverſity.

Diſciple.] BLeſſed be thy Wiſdom and Goodneſs, O holy Father, which performs all thy Will; for what thy Will decrees, cannot be otherwiſe than good and wiſe. Give me Grace, I beſeech thee,

thee, to rejoyce, not in my ſelf, or any other, but in Thee alone; For Thou only art my Hope and Crown, my Joy and Glory; All I have is received at thy bountiful Hand, bountiful to a moſt unworthy Creature, who neither could procure, nor deſerve, the leaſt of all thy Mercies: And Thou, by giving and compleating, haſt not loſt thy Property and Right, in all, which by thy means I enjoy or do. For what am I, alas! but a weak helpleſs Wretch? acquainted with Miſery from my very Cradle, and waſted with Trouble and Vexation; my Face grown old with Tears, and my Heart perplexed and broken with Doubts and Sorrows, and vehement Paſſions. I beg and long moſt earneſtly for the Bleſſing of Peace, that Peace and inward Conſolation, which thy Children feed and feaſt upon. If thou ſhalt fill my Soul with This, it will overflow with Joy and Praiſe, and continually breathe out holy Hymns to the Honour of thy Name; But if thou turn away thy Face, as ſometimes thou ſeeſt fit to do, I find my ſelf unable to run in the Way of thy Commandments; And proſtrating my ſelf in the Anguiſh of my Soul, I beat my Breaſt, and wring my Hands, for the loſs of that Light and Comfort, that Strength and Protection, which I enjoyed, while under the Shadow of thy Wings, and defended from the Aſſaults of Sorrow and Adverſity.

Righteous Father, (then ſay I) the Time is come when thou art pleaſed to try me, but even at this time, and at all others, praiſed be thy Name. Dearеſt Father, it is very meet, that, now thou call'ſt me to it, I ſhould ſuffer in obedience to thy Will. Moſt honoured Father, This is thy Hour, even that important Hour, which thou from all Eternity haſt ordained, to be the Seaſon of my outward Oppreſſion and Diſcomfort becoming the Inſtrument of endleſs Life and Joy to me: But, though this Heavineſs may endure for a Night, yet Light, and Glory will return

in the Morning. This, holy Father, is thy own Appointment, and what thou willeſt thou never willeſt in vain. For even this Suffering in the preſent Life is a Mark of thy Favour and Friendſhip; the Returns, the Inſtruments, the Manner, the Continuance of my Afflictions are all of thy permitting; for nothing is or can be done without thy Providence and Direction, without ſome wiſe and excellent Deſign. Even I my ſelf am ſenſible, *how good it is for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes*, and utterly diſcard all Pride and carnal Confidences. The Shame and Self-reproach I laboured under, hath taught me to expect Relief from God, and not from Man. And all my Afflictions put me upon contemplating the unſearchable Depths of thy Providence, which with a wonderful Temper of Juſtice and Equity layeth theſe Burdens upon Bad and Good, without any nice or diſcriminating Marks of Love or Hatred in this preſent World.

Pſal. cxix.

I will therefore render moſt unfeigned Thankſgiving to my God, for that in marvellous Kindneſs he hath not ſpared the Rod when it was convenient for me: I acknowledge his Mercy, even in the Pains, and Croſſes, and Sorrows I have endured, whether of Mind, or Body, or Eſtate; and yet much more for thoſe Refreſhments and Remedies, which thou alone haſt afforded me. For vain is all the Help of Man, but thou art the true, the powerful Phiſician of Souls, thou *woundeſt and healeſt; thou bringeſt down to the Gates of Hell, and raiſeſt up again.* Thy Chaſtiſement ſhall teach me Wiſdom; thou ſhalt beat me with the Rod, and I ſhall not dye. Behold me, Lord, moſt willingly ſubmitting to thy Diſcipline; O ſtrike, and ſpare not, ſo thou bend my ſtubborn Heart, and bring down my high Spirit; and make me tractable and obedient. I, Lord, and Mine are at thy diſpoſal, put forth thy Hand and touch them as thou plea-

Deut. xxxii.

pleaſeſt. For this I know, that how grievous ſoever theſe temporal Croſſes may be, yet better is it to feel the weight of thy Hand here, than hereafter. All things are naked and open to thee, even the inmoſt Receſſes of our Hearts, Thou knoweſt the things that will be before they are, and needeſt that any ſhould inform thee what is done upon Earth. Thou ſeeſt what will contribute moſt to my Improvement in Goodneſs; how great and good effect Diſtreſſes have, to ſcour the Ruſt from our unactive Minds, and brighten all our Virtues; Take then, my God, thy own Meaſures. I only beg, that Thou would'ſt not diſdain and give me over, and think me unworthy thy Care, for thoſe Blemiſhes and Miſdemeanours of my Life, which none are better acquainted with; which none indeed are thoroughly acquainted with, but Thou the Searcher of Hearts alone.

Work in me, I entreat, a true Amendment: Inſtruct me in all things fit for me to know, Diſpoſe me to love all things worthy my Affection; to think, that every thing deſerves my Praiſe in proportion as it pleaſes thee; to eſteem nothing highly, but what is precious and honourable in thy ſight; to look with a generous Diſdain upon all that thou thinkeſt vile, and never be reconciled to what thou hateſt. Let me not, I beſeech thee, judge by outward Appearances, the ſeeing of the Eye, or the hearing of the Ear, which are ſubject to infinite Deluſions and Miſtakes; but give me a right Judgment in all things, whether they relate to this or another State, to the outward, or the inner Man; and, above all, let it be my ſpecial Care to inform my ſelf in thy Will concerning me. Men, who form their Judgment upon Senſe, often err; Men, who ſet their Affections upon the ſenſible Objects of this World, are frequently diſappointed and miſerable: For is a Man, for inſtance, one whit the better, becauſe he is grown greater in other Mens

eſteem? Is common Opinion the Standard of Merit? Nothing leſs. For here every Man abuſes his Fellow; the Cheat impoſes upon another as great a Cheat; the Vain puffs up the Vain; the Blind miſleads the Blind; the Weak ſupports the Weak; and all the while, by empty undeſerved Commendations, each brings a true Reproach upon the other, while he Extols him againſt Senſe and Reaſon. For after all, theſe Praiſes are but Words without any Significance; nothing more than Air and empty Sound; For every Man is juſt ſo much, ſo good, and neither more nor leſs, than he is in Thy eſteem only.

Chap. LVI.

A Man muſt be content with meaner Acts of Virtue, when he is indiſpoſed for greater.

Chriſt.] DO not ſuppoſe, my Son, that thy Zeal can always be equally bright, or thy Mind capable of Tranſport and intent Contemplation upon heavenly Objects at all times. Thou carrieſt about with thee a Load of Infirmity and Corruption, which will often damp the cleareſt Flames of Devotion, darken thy Mind, and check its noble Flights; and make thee know and feel, that mortal Fleſh and Blood is a heavy, but inſeparable, Incumbrance upon a Rational and Religious Soul. While Men are in the Body, there is no remedy, but they muſt feel and groan under the weight; And groan they ought indeed, when they conſider, how great an Interruption this is to their Attendance, and entire Dedication of their Time and Thoughts, to God and heavenly Objects. Theſe they muſt be content to dwell upon as much as may be, by ſnatching all thoſe happy Inter-

Intervals, which Leiſure and a good Temper of Mind allow them.

But when the Soul is indiſpoſed for nobler Exerciſes, when Cares or Infirmities preſs it down, let it not be unactive. Variety is here of uſe; and Works of a meaner rank in the Scale of Virtue muſt be recurred to; that thou may'ſt be ſtill employed, ſtill waiting for the happy Hour, when I ſhall return and viſit thee with larger Meaſures of my Grace: bearing with Meekneſs the preſent Diſcomfort and Incapacity, the dry and barren State of thy Soul, till I ſend my refreſhing Dews, and infuſe a Principle of Fruitfulneſs for a Product in greater plenty and perfection. For I can ſoon make thee to forget thy paſt Troubles, and ſatisfie thy Mind with the Abundance of Peace. I open for thee the ſpacious Plains of Scripture, that thou may'ſt be inlarged, and run the way of my Commandments in liberty; and, with a Soul full of Joy and inward Exaltation, ſay, *I reckon that the Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which ſhall be revealed in us.* Rom. viii.

Chap. LVII.

A Man ſhould think Correction, not Comfort, his due.

Diſciple.] Lord, I muſt needs with ſhame confeſs my ſelf altogether unworthy thy Comforts, or any part of that Care thou art pleaſed to take of my Soul; and therefore I have no Pretence to complain of hard Uſage, or Injuſtice, when thou withdraweſt thy Grace, and leaveſt me to my ſelf. Whole Seas of Tears could not ſo cleanſe my polluted Soul,

as

as to render it pure enough to merit the bleſſed Influences of thy Spirit. Scourges and Vengeance are the Portion of a Wretch, who by ſo many and ſo grievous Tranſgreſſions hath offended thy Majeſty. The more therefore I reflect upon my own Sinfulneſs, the clearer and juſter Notions I have of thy free undeſerved Mercy. For merciful thou art even to Aſtoniſhment, whoſe Bowels thus yearn over the Work of thy own Hands, who thus to all the World haſt manifeſted the Riches of thy Grace in the Veſſels of Mercy, and extendeſt thy Liberality to thoſe who have no right to challenge, no recommendation to induce thee to it.

But, if we could pretend to Comforts, yet how could we expect ſuch divine, ſuch incomparably ſweet and noble Marks of thy Favour? ſo very unlike, ſo much above, any Humane Helps, or Encouragements? For how could I expect the Bread of Life from Heaven? Good Works I know of none I have to plead; but the ſlighteſt recollection even amazes and confounds me with Sins innumerable brought to my remembrance. My vehement Proneneſs to Evil, and ſhameful Sloth and Backwardneſs to Reformation and Goodneſs, are of themſelves ſo evident, that ſhould I labour to cloak them, the attempt muſt needs be vain: For Thou, the Searcher of Hearts, art privy to them; Thou canſt diſprove me, and no Advocate is to be found, who could offer any thing in my vindication. What then can I juſtly lay claim to, but Hell and everlaſting Flames? I own with Grief and Shame, that Reproach and Contempt are my due, and that I am unworthy to be named among thy Sons, or even thy meaneſt Servants. Nature indeed ſtarts back, and cannot without reluctancy acknowledge its own Vileneſs and Guilt; but I will offer violence to my native Pride, and freely confeſs my Sins, that thou may'ſt ſhew thy Juſtice and Faithfulneſs,

neſs, in a full and free Pardon of the Faults I ſo freely confeſs.

But where ſhall I find Words fit for ſo miſerable a Condition, or how ſhall ſo ſcandalous a Creature apply to thee for Pardon? I know no other Terms than theſe, that can become my Mouth. "Lord, I have "ſinned, I have done wickedly. Mercy, thou Judge "of Quick and Dead, Mercy, or I periſh. Reſpit thy "Sentence yet a little while, and grant me ſome time "at leaſt to bewail my Miſery, before I be ſwallowed "up in Darkneſs, and go into a Land black "with the terrours of the ſhadow of Death. Job x.

"What other reparation doſt thou expect, what other "can indeed be had, from Men laden with Guilt and "Infirmity, than that they ſhould ſeriouſly bewail and "humble themſelves for their mighty and manifold "Provocations? Hence all our Hopes of Remiſſion "ſpring, here the firſt Seeds of Reconciliation take "root, the Joy of a peaceful Conſcience is ſown in "Tears; the Acknowledgment of our Weakneſs is the "firſt Step towards repairing our Loſs, the firſt De"fence againſt the Wrath to come; and in theſe me"lancholy Solitudes the gracious God and penitent "Soul meet and embrace each other. A broken and "a contrite Heart is reputed a *Sacrifice*, Pſalm li. "and Thou, in marvellous Condeſcenſion "preferreſt it before the Odours of the ſweeteſt In"cenſe, or whole Hecatombs of Burnt-offerings. Of "this that precious Ointment, whoſe Perfumes, when "it anointed thy holy Feet, filled the whole Houſe, "was an Emblem; for Thou, Lord, never didſt or "wilt deſpiſe a Soul afflicted with a Senſe of Sin. Con"trition and Humility are our Sanctuary againſt the "Rage and Malice of our Spiritual Adverſary; and "Tears of Penitence, that purifying Stream, which "waſhes off the Stains and Blemiſhes of our defiled "Souls.

CHAP.

Chap. LVIII.

The Grace of God dwells not with worldly-minded Men.

Christ.] The Tokens of my Love are of a nobler kind, than that they ſhould ſubmit to be rivalled by the Bleſſings of this World, and heavenly Comforts diſdain to mix with thoſe of Earth. If then, my Son, thou deſire to be filled full of my Benediction and Grace, all that obſtruct its free Poſſeſſion of thy Heart muſt be effectually diſcarded. Covet Retirement, and prefer private Converſation with thy God, before all the Diverſions of Humane Society; Eſteem no Company ſo delightful as thy Cloſet and thy Devotions, and there, by fervent Prayers, pour out thy Soul alone, that thy Zeal may be quickened, and thy Peace of Conſcience ſecured. Let the whole World be mean in thy Eſteem, and account it a greater Honour to be called and choſen of God, than any Advantages of Fortune or Advancement can confer. For, be aſſured, thy Soul cannot admit of two ſuch different Affections, as the Love of Me, and tranſitory Pleaſures. The moſt intimate Acquaintance and deareſt Friends muſt not ſtand in Competition with Me, but They who will be mine in good earneſt, muſt follow the Apoſtle's Advice, and behave *themſelves as Strangers and Pilgrims in a World which muſt ſhortly be diſſolved*; And when that time of this, or their own, Diſſolution approaches, the Joy and holy Truſt of that Mind, which ſits looſe to all here below, is more bleſſed than Words can expreſs.

2 Pet. iii.

But to live thus abſtracted and diſengaged from the World, is a Perfection not attainable by every common Man; nor can the ſenſual Perſon taſt the Delights, or enjoy the Liberty, of a true ſpiritual State. For this requires

quires a diſtance to be kept from all external Objects, that thoſe things Humane Nature loves moſt tenderly ſhould be renounced, nay even that himſelf ſhould be ſo; for each Man is his own worſt Enemy, and the moſt threatning Dangers riſe from within. He that hath gained an entire Conqueſt over himſelf, will find no mighty difficulty to ſubdue all other Oppoſition; for this is a complete Victory indeed. And when the Senſual Appetite ſubmits readily to the Rational Powers, and thoſe Powers again as readily ſubmit to my Will, this Man is Maſter of himſelf and all the World. But They who would aſpire to this Perfection, muſt ſet out with Reſolution, and early lay the Ax to the Root of the Tree, that no darling Sin, no corrupt or inordinate Affection, may be left ſtanding. For all that Bitterneſs and Sin, which is neceſſary to be hewn down in order to an entire Reformation and heavenly Purity of Heart and Life, are but ſo many Branches of that corrupt Stock, the irregular Love of a Man's own ſelf. And when that Stock is killed and cut down, profound Peace, and uninterrupted Happineſs are the Conſequents of ſuch Mortification.

The only Reaſon, why ſo many continue ſtill entangled in ſenſual Affections, and find themſelves unable to ſoar above themſelves and the Incumbrances here below, is, that very few have attained to the Skill of dying to their own Inclinations, and deveſting themſelves of narrow and ſelfiſh Deſigns. For He who affects to converſe freely with God, muſt firſt abandon all carnal and immoderate Deſires, and get looſe from thoſe Intanglements, which clog and faſten down the Soul to Earth, who ſtill retain a fondneſs of any created Being, and by minding temporal Things, ſhew that they are content to ſet up their Reſt, ſhort of Heaven and God himſelf. *Set* therefore *thy Affections on things above, and not on things on the Earth*; *for no Man is ſufficient for the Service of* Coloſſ. iii. 2.

two

Matth. vi. 24. *two Maſters; nor canſt thou love Me and Mammon both.*

Chap. LIX.

The different Motions of Nature and Grace.

Chriſt.] BE careful, my Son, to diſtinguiſh between Nature and Grace, and nicely to obſerve their different Tendencies and Proſpects; for theſe are ſo very diſtant, ſo contrary to each other, and yet withal ſo intricate that they require a ſpiritual and enlightned Underſtanding, exactly to diſcern them. In the general Deſire of Good all Mankind agree, this is the Spur and Spring of every Word and Action; but that which produces ſo very different Effects from the ſame Original Cauſe, is, that Men often miſtake Shadows for Subſtance, and are impoſed upon by falſe Appearances of Good.

Nature acts craftily, allures, inſnares, cheats thoſe that attend to its Wiles, and propoſes the gratifying her ſelf for the end of all ſhe does. Grace deals candidly and ſincerely, complies with no Evil, puts no cheat upon Men, does all with regard to God, and reſts in Him as its ſupreme and only End. Nature declines Death and Sufferings, hates Trouble and Sorrow, Subjection and Obedience; Grace is exerciſed in perpetual Mortification and Self-denial; chooſes to be over-ruled, to ſubmit; nay reſtrains even lawful and innocent Liberties; does not affect Dominion and Superiority, but chooſes to live in a State of Humility and Subjection, and eſteems no Hardſhip, no Compliance uneaſie, for the ſake of God and a good Conſcience. Nature is ſelfiſh, and always computes what Profit every Action may bring to the Perſon that does it; Grace overlooks all

all private Gain, and labours chiefly to promote the publick Good. Nature delights in Honours and Preferments, in a celebrated Name, and the Commendations of Men; Grace aſcribes all the Honour and Praiſe to God, and thinks, that things done well are well rewarded by his Acceptance and Approbation. Nature dreads Ignominy and Contempt, but Grace accounts it Matter of great Joy to be expoſed and vilified in a good Cauſe.

Nature is pleaſed with Eaſe and Indulgence, and bodily Reſt; Grace is ever active, and undertakes Buſineſs and Toil with cheerfulneſs. Nature is charmed with Beauty and Curioſity, and diſdains things that are mean, and vulgar, and common; Grace is delighted with ſuch as are plain and low in the Eſteem of the World, diſdains not thoſe that are unpalatable, nor thinks her ſelf the worſe, for the want of outward Gayeties and Ornaments. Nature aims at tranſitory Enjoyments, is fond of Wealth and Increaſe, tenderly affected with Loſſes and Diſappointments, and provoked to the laſt degree with Inſolence and Reproach: Grace keeps eternal Advantages in view, neglects the fading and periſhing, bears Loſſes with evenneſs of Temper, endures Contempt and Scandal patiently. For Theſe, ſhe conſiders, are things of no mighty concern, to One whoſe Heart and Treaſure are in Heaven; a Place, where they are ſafe, and no Misfortune can reach them. Nature is niggardly and griping, and chooſes rather to receive than give; Grace, bountiful and kind, deſpiſing ſordid Gain and Parſimony, content with a little, diſtributes liberally and cheerfully, and eſteems *it more bleſſed to give than to receive.* Acts xx.

Nature inclines to Creature-comforts, to fleſhly Delights, to worldly Vanities and Pomps, to wandring and idle Diverſions; Grace fixes the Heart upon God and Goodneſs, concerns it ſelf with the World as little as may be, hates fleſhly Luſts, checks and confines roving Imaginations, and affects Privacy and So-

Solitude. Nature is much delighted with ſenſual Pleaſures; Grace feels no Pleaſure but in God alone, and prefers that before all the Delights that the Objects of Senſe can afford. Nature does nothing without ſome Proſpect of Intereſt, and for every Kindneſs expects as good or better Returns, either of things in kind, or at leaſt of Favour and Applauſe for its pretended Generoſity, and ſets a very high Value upon all the Obligations it lays; Grace deſires no Recompence in this World, but looks upon God as her Reward; nor are the Supplies and Conveniences of Life any farther of conſideration with her, than as a comfortable Subſiſtence in this World may be ſerviceable in promoting and facilitating the Endeavours after another.

Nature values her ſelf upon a diffuſive Intereſt, and multitude of Relations and Friends, Quality and Noble Blood; and therefore fawns upon, or favours, Men in Power, courts and careſſes the Rich, commends and is partial to Perſons of the ſame Condition or Opinion, or Party: Grace is charitable and kind even to Enemies; is not exalted by great or numerous Friendſhips; and thinks the Deſcent and Family of a Man a very deſpicable thing, unleſs his Virtues be as much more eminent than thoſe of his Inferiours, as his Birth and Rank is above theirs; Grace favours the Poor rather than the Rich, and is more concerned for the hard Fortune of an Innocent Perſon, than of a Great One; pays its Reſpects to true intrinſick Worth, not to the meer Signs and Trappings of it, which often only ſhew where it ought to be, not where it really is; Encourages the Good in Virtue, inſtead of flattering and ſoothing up the Mighty in their Wickedneſs and Folly; and labours indefatigably to conform thoſe who profeſs themſelves God's Children, to the Likeneſs of their heavenly Father's Excellencies, by propagating all manner of Piety and Goodneſs.

Nature

Nature is easily provoked to Discontent by hard Circumstances; Grace bears Want and Poverty with Meekness and much Patience. Nature's Ends and Designs constantly centre in her self; but Grace considers her Original, and thinks, that all should return thither from whence at first it came; arrogates nothing to it self, is not assuming, does not contend for Praise or Preference; is not dogmatical and peremptory in her own Opinions, but, in all Searches after Truth, submits her own Reason and Judgment, to the incomprehensible Wisdom of God. Nature affects to be knowing, to understand and penetrate the profoundest and darkest Mysteries, makes Ostentation of all her new Discoveries, and pretends to Experiment, and Demonstration; labours to distinguish her self, to be thought wiser than the rest of the World, and would be extolled and admired for all that is spoken, or written, or done: Grace thinks it not advisable to lay out Time and Thought, upon new or unprofitable Curiosities; but considers, that the Ruine of Mankind is owing to that busie Desire of knowing what God thought fit to conceal from them; that this inquisitive pretending Temper is a Sprout from that old Root of Bitterness; that established Truths may be depended upon, but new and fanciful Notions are almost no sooner entertained, than they are disproved and exploded again. That Men should therefore check that vain Pleasure, which tickles their itching Minds upon these Occasions; abandon Vain-glory, labour rather to conceal, than to publish, their Advantages; and make Usefulness, and Virtue, and God's Honour, the only End of all their Knowledge and Studies. For to Him alone all Thanks and Praise must of necessity be due, who gives Men all they have, of his own meer Motion and free Mercy.

And such is Grace, a Light superiour to Nature, which should direct and preside over it; the peculiar

Gift of God; the diſtinguiſhing Character of his Choſen; the ſure Pledge of everlaſting Salvation; for it raiſes a Man's Affections from Earth to Heaven, and changes him from Fleſh to Spirit. And, becauſe theſe two Principles are acted by ſuch different Motives, proceed in ſuch different Methods, and purſue ſuch differing Ends; therefore, in proportion as Nature is weakned and ſubdued, the larger Meaſures of Grace are imparted, the more Mens Virtues are improved, and the glorious Image of God renewed in their Hearts, by holy and heavenly Diſpoſitions.

Chap. LX.

The Weakneſs of Corrupt Nature, and Efficacy of Divine Grace.

Diſciple.] THou haſt indeed, my God, created me in thy own Image after thy Likeneſs, and commanded *me to be Holy, as thou thy ſelf art Holy.* O grant me, I beſeech thee, that Favour and Aſſiſtance, which, thy own Word hath taught me, is ſo important, ſo abſolutely neceſſary, to Salvation; that I may vanquiſh my own Nature, whoſe Inclinations are now ſo degenerate, ſo corrupt, that they have a ſtrong and conſtant tendency to Sin and Death. For I feel and lament a *Law of Sin in my Body warring continually againſt the Law of my Mind*, drawing me to Compliance with the fleſhly and ſenſual Appetite, and diſabling me from any reſolute Reſiſtance againſt its fatal Motions, except thy Divine Grace pour in freſh Succours, and help me to ſtand in the Day of Battle. Lord, I have need not only of thy Grace, but of very plentiful and powerful Communications of it, to turn

Gen. 1. xxvi. 1. Pet. i.

Rom. vii.

turn the Byaſs of Nature, which, from my very Infancy, preponderates to Evil. For this Infection is derived from the firſt Parent of Mankind, and the Puniſhment of his Offence diffuſed upon his whole Poſterity; ſo that the Humane Nature, which came pure and good out of thy creating Hand, is tainted and perverted, and all the Motions now remaining draw the wrong way, and bend to Sin and Earth.

The little Power left in us to do good is like a very ſmall Spark covered with a huge Heap of Embers: the Light of Reaſon clouded with a thick noiſom Miſt of Darkneſs and Errour; And, though by this all the Diſtinctions of Good and Evil, of Truth and Falſhood are not utterly loſt, yet the Power of performing what our better Senſe approves is gone; the Light of Truth is dim and feeble, and the Integrity of our Minds and Affections is blemiſhed, and diverted from attending to it impartially. Hence it comes to paſs, that, though ſometimes I am delighted with thy Law in the inner Man, and fully convinced, that *the Commandment is holy, and juſt and good*, condemning Wickedneſs, and warning me of the Rocks and Precipices, which in ſteering my Courſe through the Waves of this troubleſome World, I muſt be watchful to avoid; yet ſtill with *the Fleſh I ſerve the Law of Sin*, and find a greater Diſpoſition to follow Luſt and Senſe, than to be governed by Reaſon and Religion. Hence I ſo often feel the *will to do well*; but *how to perform what I thus will I find not*. Hence I often make and repeat good Reſolutions with great Sincerity; but, for want of thy Aſſiſtance to counterpoiſe my Infirmities, quickly fall from my own Steadfaſtneſs, and am beaten off with the very approach of Difficulty and Oppoſition. Hence I diſcern the Way I ſhould walk in; but when I am informed of my Duty, and endeavour to raiſe my ſelf above the World and its Temptations, a fatal innate Weight draws

Rom. vii.

draws me down again, and checks my Soul in its intended Flights to Heaven and Thee.

How abſolutely needful then, my God, is thy Grace to help me in beginning, in carrying on, in accompliſhing every good Work! ſince without it I can do nothing, and yet with it can do even all things; yet not I, Lord, but Thou, who art in me, and ſtrengtheneſt me. O Gift truly Divine! without which no Deſert of Man, no Endowments or Qualifications of Nature, are of any worth or ſignificance at all! Sciences and Arts, Riches and Power, Beauty and Strength, Wit and Eloquence, What are they, Lord, or what to be accounted of, if not ſeconded, aſſiſted, exalted, perfected by Grace? Theſe are Accompliſhments diſtributed promiſcuouſly to Good and Bad, but Grace is a Gift peculiar to thy Children and Choſen; and ſuch as renders the happy Men that have it worthy of Eternal Life and Happineſs. A Gift ſo ſingularly excellent, that neither the Gift of Propheſie, nor the Power of working Miracles, nor the Underſtanding of ſublimeſt and moſt abſtruſe Myſteries; nor Faith, nor Hope, nor any other Virtue or Privilege can recommend us to God without it.

O bleſſed Efficacy of Grace! which makes the Poor in Spirit rich in Virtue and good Works; and that Man ſo enriched, humble and poor in Spirit! Come, heavenly Gift, Deſcend from Above, ſhed thy ſelf into my Soul, and fill every dark Corner there with Light and Comfort; rouze and ſhake off my Sloth, moiſten the dry Soil, and command Fruitfulneſs out of that barren Ground. Vouchſafe me, Lord, this Bleſſing; for This alone is ſufficient for me, though thou ſhould'ſt think fit to deny or withdraw all, that Nature can either beſtow or is moſt fond of acquiring. Give me but this Defence, and no Temptation ſhall confound me, no Calamity diſmay or make me afraid. For this alone is Strength and Courage, Wiſdom and Pro-

Protection; Stronger than all my Enemies, and Wiser than all Humane Counsels and Contrivances; The Teacher of Truth, the Mistress of holy Discipline, the Light of the Soul, the Solace of Troubles, the Resolver of Doubts, the Balm of my Wounds, the Dispeller of Melancholy, the Banisher of Fear, the Cherisher of Devotion, the Parent of Contrition, the Spring of holy Tears, and all those Streams, that wash and purge polluted Consciences. What am I, without this, but dry Stubble, a rotten Trunk, dead to good Works, useless and unprofitable, and fit for nothing but to be troden under Foot, and cast into the Fire? Let therefore, O my God, I most humbly and heartily entreat; O! let this Grace and Favour of thine *always prevent and follow, and make me continually to be given to all good Works*; that *in all my Actions begun, continued and ended in Thee, I may glorifie thy Holy Name*; *and finally by thy Mercy, obtain everlasting Life.* Amen, Amen.

Collect for xvii. Sunday after *Trinity*. Collect after Communion.

Chap. LXI.

Self-denial enforced from Christ's Example.

Christ.] The more, my Son, thou forsakest thy self, the nearer approaches thou makest toward Me: As the Desires and intemperate Love of Things without, must be discarded in order to the Peace of one's own Breast; so even the Love of one's own Self must be laid aside in order to a perfect Union with God. Learn therefore absolutely to deny thy own Will for mine, without contradiction or complaint. Follow Me; *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.* Without the Way can be no Walking, without

out the Truth no Knowledge, without the Life no Living: Keep then in this Way, for it is unalterable; believe in this Truth, for it is infallible; Hope for and aſpire to this Life, for it is true, happy and eternal Life. Continue in my Way and thou ſhalt know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make thee free, that thou may'ſt inherit everlaſting Life. *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* If thou wilt know the Truth, believe my Words. If thou wilt be perfect, ſell that thou haſt. If thou wilt ſave thy Life hereafter, diſpiſe it here. If thou wilt be exalted in Heaven, abaſe thy ſelf upon Earth. If thou deſire to Reign with me, take up the Croſs with me. For none but They who imitate my Croſs are in the right Way to Happineſs and true Glory.

Matth. xix.

Diſciple.] This Way, O Lord, is ſtrait and rugged, ſuch as the World decline and cannot endure to think of; therefore I beg, thy Grace would enable me to deſpiſe the World, and diſſent from the general Opinion of Men, in compliance with thy Command and Example. For the *Servant is not greater than his Lord, nor the Diſciple above his Maſter.* Let thy Servant then be guided in thy Steps, for with Thee is Life and true Holineſs. And all I read or hear from any other Hand, gives me no Refreſhment, no true Delight.

John xv.

Chriſt.] *If thou knoweſt theſe things, my Son, happy art thou, if thou do them.* For Practice, and not Knowledge, ſhall inherit the Bleſſing. *He that keepeth my Commandments and doth them, he it is that loveth me, and I will love him* in return, *and manifeſt my ſelf to him,* and ſet him upon a Throne with me in my Father's Kingdom.

John xiii.

John xiv.

Diſciple.] Lord, make me a Partaker of this gracious Promiſe. The Croſs which I have received from thy Hand, I will bear with Conſtancy even unto Death.

The

The Life of a true Chriſtian is indeed one continued Croſs; but ſince this is the Way that leads to Paradiſe, it is by no means fit, that I ſhould depart from it, or repent of my holy Reſolutions, and good Beginnings.

Come then, my Chriſtian Brethren, let us advance boldly. Courage, for Chriſt is with us; He does not only lead us on, but will enable us to follow him. For His ſake we have taken up the Croſs, and for his ſake we muſt perſevere in bearing it. Behold, the King and Captain of our Salvation, marches at our Head, ready to fight our Battles. Let Us, like gallant Soldiers follow; let us abandon our Fears, and manfully prepare to dye in the Field; and not ſtain our Honour and loſe our Crown, by flinching from that Service, and thoſe Hardſhips, which he hath made our Duty and our Glory.

Chap. LXII.

Againſt being Dejected with Temptations.

Chriſt.] Judge not, my Son, of thy Favour and Acceptance with God, by ſuch falſe Meaſures, as the Warmth of thy Devotion, and the Delight which reſults from the Diſcharge of thy Duty; For I am better pleaſed with Humility and Patience, and deep Contrition of Heart, in a diſconſolate and afflicted State, than with an eager Zeal, and the moſt exalted Acts of an eaſie and proſperous Piety. And whence is it, doſt thou think, that every little Scandal, which detracts from thy Reputation, ſo ſenſible affects thee? Were it yet more to thy Diſparagement, yet could it not be worth thy Concern. This is not the firſt Injury of this kind, nor is it like

to be the laſt, if thou live longer among Men; and what is not new or ſtrange ought not to ſurpriſe thee, I know thy Courage and pretended Bravery, while Danger keeps its diſtance; Thou canſt diſcourſe like a Philoſopher and a Chriſtian, and give excellent Advice to thy Friends, when they labour under any Diſtreſs; but when Their Caſe happens to be thy own, and ſome unexpected Calamity comes home to thee, thy Prudence and Reſolution forſake thee quite, and thou ſtandeſt no leſs in need of the Counſel and Support, which thou wert wont ſo freely to impart to others heretofore.

Let this Experiment remind thee of thy own Frailty, which by ſuch Inſtances appears not to be Proof againſt the ſlighteſt Misfortunes. For even Theſe Inſtances are greatly for thy advantage, and bring thee to a right and perfect underſtanding of thy own Condition. Grow wiſer at leaſt at thy own expence; and as thy calmer Reaſon ſhews they ought to be, ſo let thy Behaviour manifeſt, that theſe tender Reſentments of Temporal Evils are, baniſhed out of thy Mind. If thou cannot entertain Adverſity with abſolute Indifference, yet let it not drive thee to Deſpondency and wicked Diſtruſt; and, however the firſt Onſet may diſturb thee, yet rally quickly, and let it not long overpower thee; and though perhaps thou art not arrived to that perfection, of *counting it all Joy,* James i. 2 *when thou falleſt into divers Temptations,* thou canſt not be excuſed from undergoing them with Meekneſs, and Reſignation, and Patience. If thou art not yet got even thus far, but ſome indecent Reflections riſe up in thy Mind, yet let not this ſecret Indignation break out into irreverent Expreſſions; but *ſet a Watch upon thy Tongue, and keep the Door of thy* Pſal. cxli. and xxxix. *Lips,* reſolve at leaſt that *thy Mouth ſhall not offend*; and though thy Heart be hot within thee, yet let not any paſſionate Complaints burſt out,

out, which may caſt Imputations upon the Honour of God, impeach the Juſtice and Goodneſs of Providence, or give Offence to thy weaker Brethren. For by thus manning and guarding well the Outworks, thy inward Commotions will in time be compoſed; thy Sorrow by degrees ſhall turn into Joy, and the Favour and Mercy of that God, be inclined to relieve and comfort thee, in recompence for thy Reverence and Submiſſion to his good Pleaſure.

As I live, ſaith the Lord, I will help thee ſpeedily, and comfort them who earneſtly ſeek me; who put their truſt in my Salvation. Call up thy Chriſtian Fortitude, and ſink not under thy Burden, but prepare for greater Tryals. If thy former Troubles have overwhelmed thy Spirits, and prevailed over thy Temper and thy Virtue, let not the Remembrance of thy former Tryals diſcourage thee. *The Lord knoweth whereof thou art made, he remembreth that thou art but Duſt:* A Man and not God; Fleſh and not Angel, or unbodied Spirit; How canſt thou then expect to continue in an undiſturbed ſtate of Goodneſs? How ſhould thy Virtue be above the ſhocks and ſhakings of Temptation, when even the Angels kept not their firſt Eſtate; and Man in Paradiſe, ſo ſoon fell from Innocence? I am thy ſole Protection, who raiſe the Souls dejected with Sorrow, preſerve thoſe who acknowledge and bewail their own Weakneſs, and glorifie with my ſelf the humble Chriſtians, who are aſhamed of their Follies and Miſcarriages. Pſalm ciii.

Diſciple. Bleſſed be thy Mercy, for the gracious Words which drop from thy Mouth, ſoft as the gentle Dew, and ſweeter than Hony and the Hony-comb. What would become of me in the extremity of my Diſtreſs and Anguiſh of my Soul, did not thy Promiſes and ſeaſonable Inſtructions refreſh and comfort me? But be it as thou wilt; For I cannot think it any great matter, how long or boiſterous my Voyage is, ſo thou at

at laſt conduct me ſafe, to that peaceful Haven, where good Men are at reſt: Let my Afflictions be never ſo great, ſo thou grant a happy Iſſue, and turn my Sufferings to good Effect. Be my Condition in this Life adverſe or proſperous, no Proſperity will profit, no Adverſity harm me, but in proportion to the State in which I dye. And if I go well out of the World, my continuance in it cannot be ſo troubleſome that I ſhould have cauſe to repent or complain. Order my Affairs then as thou pleaſeſt; but always, O my God, remember me, for good; lead me in the right and ready Way to thy Kingdom, diſpoſe my every Action toward the attainment of Salvation, and *let me ſo paſs through things Temporal, that I finally loſe not the things Eternal.* Amen.

Chap. LXIII.

Againſt Prying into Things too high for us, and pretending to Fathom the Depths of God and Providence.

Chriſt.] DO not, my Son, take upon thee to diſpute, or determine any thing concerning abſtruſe and difficult Points; nor too curiouſly enquire into thoſe myſterious Diſpenſations, which God hath purpoſely concealed from thee. Concern not thy ſelf about the amazing Diſtributions of Grace or Providence; why One Man is forſaken and in diſfavour with God; Another ſo ſurpriſingly indulged by him; This Perſon exerciſed with Afflictions and Sorrows, or That ſo gently dealt with, ſo unaccountably exalted. Theſe are things out of thy Sphere; and all the Parts and Penetration, the acuteſt Wit, and acquired Improvements of Man, are much too ſhort

ſhort and feeble to enter into the Reaſons of the Divine Counſels. If therefore ſuch Curioſities return upon thee, look upon them as the Suggeſtions of the Devil, by which he labours to diſquiet and unſettle thee. If Men, impertinently buſie, require a Solution of ſuch Difficulties, content thy ſelf with that general Anſwer of the Prophet; *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and Juſt are thy Judgments; The Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; His Righteouſneſs ſtandeth like the ſtrong Mountains*, fixt and immovable, eminent and conſpicuous; and *his Judgments are like the Great Deep.* A vaſt and dark Abyſs, ſuch as we cannot ſee to the bottom of, nor fathom with the ſhort Line of a finite Underſtanding. Jer. xii. 1. Pſalm xix. 8. Pſal. xxxvi. 7.

My Methods and Dealings are to be Admired and had in Reverence, not ſawcily Criticized upon by my own Creatures: For no Creature can have a Capacity proportioned to them; and what Men cannot comprehend, they ſhould not preſume to take into Examination.

As little ought they to enquire and diſpute concerning the Merits or the Preference of Good Men; Which of the Saints excels in Virtue, or is greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven? For theſe are Queſtions, in which Men are no way concerned; ſuch as ingender Strife and Debate, and turn to no good Account; they cheriſh Arrogance and Pride, Envy and Faction, while Men break into Parties, and each contends for the Præeminence of Him, whoſe Order and Patronage he is devoted to, or whom his own vain Imagination inclines him moſt to honour. The Effect of this is very viſible, and the Miſchiefs that ſpring from ſuch an impertinent Zeal, exceeding numerous and lamentable; The Controverſie neither poſſible to be decided, nor worth deciding, if it were. And, if thoſe Saints have any knowledge what paſſes here below, this indiſcreet and

and partial Zeal cannot but be highly diſpleaſing to them. For I am not a God of Contention and Faction, but of Order and Peace and Love; And Theſe are the genuine Products of true Modeſty and Humility, ſuch as eſteems others better than it ſelf; but inconſiſtent with that bold aſſuming Temper, which is reſtleſs and diſcontented, if any other be preferred before it. It may be, Affection and honeſt Zeal may diſpoſe ſome Men to be more liberal in their Reſpects on this or that ſide of the differing Parties; but do not ſuch conſider, that ſuch Affection is not the Effect of Grace or Religion, but merely of Humane Infirmity? Theſe are ſuch Prepoſſeſſions, as I can never be capable of; for all the Saints are equally mine. My Hand made them Men, my Aſſiſting Grace made them Saints; I enriched them with Virtues, and crowned them all with Glory. I know what each have done, what Occaſions they had, what Improvements they made. I foreknew them before Time was; They choſe not Me, but I Them; and ſingled them out of the Common Croud; I drew them with the Cords of Love and Mercy, conducted them through great variety of Tryals and Afflictions; ſuſtained them with uncommon Comforts, and Recruits; enabled them to Perſevere, and rewarded the Conſtancy my ſelf had given: I know the firſt and laſt, and my fatherly, my inexpreſſible Affection extends to them All; For All are Inſtruments of my Praiſe and Glory, ſo many Monuments and eternal Trophies of my Goodneſs; freely advanced to what they are by my Bounty and Favour, without any Right or antecedent Merit of their own. He therefore who deſpiſes the leaſt of theſe is guilty of Diſreſpect to the greateſt; for this Contempt reflects at laſt on Me, the Author of their Virtues and their Happineſs; and therefore in Me alone ſhould all the Honour pretended to be paid to Them center. Their Intereſts and Properties are no longer ſeparate, for Charity hath made

made them One, knit them into the ſame myſtical Body, whoſe Honours and Advantages and Inclinations and Joys are inſeparably the ſame. Nay, which is the utmoſt Perfection of Charity, they all conſpire in loving me more than themſelves, or any Merits or Reſpects of their own; For, being in that happy State exalted above themſelves, they are entirely taken up with the Love and Honour of God. This is their Happineſs, and utmoſt End. Nothing can divert them to meaner Proſpects, no Mixture of Self comes in betwixt, to damp the pure Flames of this everlaſting Love.

Away then with theſe vain Curioſities, theſe eager Diſputes concerning the Condition of the Bleſſed, which betray a Prevalence of carnal and ſenſual Appetites; ſuch as have no Notions higher than particular Gains and ſeparate Intereſts. Nature and Partiality inclines ſuch Diſpoſitions to Act and Deſire, and Love and Hate, upon private and perſonal Conſiderations; and then they fondly transfer the ſame Ideas and the ſame Behaviour from earthly, to heavenly, Objects. Alas! The difference is the wideſt in the World, and nothing in nature ſo diſtant, as the ſilly Imaginations of ſuch Novices in Matters of another World, from thoſe juſter Apprehenſions, which Minds enlightened from above entertain upon theſe Occaſions. Be not too curious then, my Son, in Matters above thy Capacity, but rather let it be thy care and conſtant thought, how thou may'ſt be found, though it be but the leaſt, in the Kingdom of Heaven. For couldſt thou underſtand all Myſteries and all Knowledge, couldſt thou diſtinctly view the ſeveral Orders and Places of each Angel and Spirit above, yet what would this avail, farther than as it excited in thee leſs for thy Own, and greater Zeal for My, Honour? The Man who ſeriouſly reflects upon the Multitude of his own Sins, and the Defects and Worthleſneſs of his own Virtues, how few, how poor, how far ſhort they are

of

of the Perfection of thoſe bright Examples heretofore, employs his Mind upon a Subject, which God likes much better, than ſuch empty Speculations as concern the Præeminence or the Subordination of them, who have ſet thoſe Examples.

This is a Controverſie, which they themſelves never trouble themſelves about. For they aſcribe nothing to any Deſerts of their own, but acknowledge the whole of what they have and are, to be the ſole Effect of my infinite Liberality and Love. And their Happneſs and Honour is complete by the Joy they take in the Fruition of God and his Glory. The more exalted any of theſe are, the more modeſt they are, the more dear, and the more like to me. Thus much is Intimated by that Viſion, where they are ſaid to *caſt their Crowns at the Feet of God, and falling down upon their Faces before the Throne and before the Lamb, to worſhip him that liveth for ever and ever.*

Rev. x.

How abſurd is it to ſee Men zealouſly contending, who is greateſt in the Kingdom of God, who are not ſolicitous in the mean while to know, what much more nearly concerns them, whether they ſhall have any place at all there themſelves? And yet to be leaſt there is to be great, for even the leaſt are Sons and Heirs of God. *A little one ſhall become a Thouſand, and the Child ſhall dye an hundred Years old, but the Sinner of a hundred Years old ſhall be accurſed.*

Iſai. lx. 22. —— lxv. 20.

When the Diſciples enquired who ſhould be the greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven, this was the Anſwer made to that Demand: *Except ye be converted, and become as little Children, ye ſhall in no wiſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore whoſoever ſhall humble himſelf as this little Child, the ſame ſhall be greateſt in the Kingdom of Heaven.* Wo to Them, who diſdain to imitate the Humility and Meekneſs of little Children; for ſtrait and low is the Gate of Heaven, ſuch as the towrings of Ambition, and ſwellings of

Matth. xviii.

of bloated Vanity can never ſtoop to, or enter at. Wo to the Rich, who have their Conſolation in this World; for while the Poor are admitted into Paradiſe, they ſhall ſtand Weeping and Wailing without. But Rejoyce ye Meek and Humble and Poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God, if ye heartily embrace and obey the Truth, and be rich in Patience and good Diſpoſitions.

Chap. LXIV.

God is All the Good Man's Hope and Confidence.

Diſciple.] IN whom, O Lord, is my Hope while here below, or what, of all the Things under Heaven, can miniſter Peace and Comfort to my Soul? *Truly my Hope is even in thee*, and my Joy and Truſt in thy Mercy alone. When were my Affairs in ill Condition with thee? or what can prevent my being exquiſitely miſerable without thee? Poverty for thy ſake is infinitely rather to be choſen, than all the Riches and Greatneſs in the World in exchange for thy Favour; and Earth and Exile with that Favour more bliſsful than Heaven without the Fruition of Thee. For Heaven is Heaven by thy bleſſed Preſence, and where that does not reſide, all is Death, and the Grave, and Hell. Thou art my Deſire and my Portion, and therefore to thee my Sighs and Groans, and Cries and Prayers continually aſcend. I have no other Stay or Refuge, who can ſend ſeaſonable and ſuitable Relief to all my Dangers and Neceſſities; But thou alone art my Hope and Truſt, my effectual Comforter, and faithful Friend.

Others purſue their own private Ends and Advantages, but thou ſeekeſt my Improvement and Happineſs,

pineſs, and ordereſt all Things for my Good. Even my Temptations and Afflictions are appointed to do me ſervice; Theſe are the Methods, by which the Fidelity of thy Choſen is brought to the Teſt; and even theſe harſher Diſpenſations ought as much to engage my Affections, and excite my Gratitude and Praiſe; as the brighteſt Comforts, and moſt deſired Proſperity. In thee therefore, O my God, I reſt my Soul; Thou art my Sanctuary, where I depoſit the Burthen of all my Griefs and Troubles. For there alone can They and I be ſafe; ſince all things elſe are feeble and uncertain, neither able, nor always diſpoſed, to comfort or protect me. Friends cannot do what they wiſh, Great Men will not, or cannot help; The Wiſe without thee miſtake their Meaſures; Books are but inſignificant Diverſion, and yield no ſolid Conſolation; Wealth cannot buy Eaſe and Peace of Mind; Fortreſſes and Coverts cannot hide me from Calamity; Unleſs thou be with thoſe Friends, and ſtrengthen thoſe great Men, and direct thoſe Counſellors, and inſtruct me by thoſe Books, and aſſiſt me in the uſe of Wealth, and guard that ſtrong Retreat. For Peace and Happineſs are entirely in Thee. Thou art the End, the Summ, the Source, of all Good; The Perfection of Life, the Depth of Wiſdom and Knowledge: And Hope in Thee is the ſureſt, the moſt ſenſible Support, thy Servants can have in the Miſeries of this mortal Life.

To Thee therefore lift I up my Eyes, O Father of Mercies and Lover of Men: Comfort my Soul in Trouble, and purifie it with thy Grace, that it may be a clean and holy Habitation, ſuch as thy glorious Majeſty does not diſdain to dwell in. Let no Impurity be left in this Temple; but purge it throughly from every thing which may offend thoſe Eyes, that cannot behold Iniquity or Uncleanneſs. Look upon me in thy great Goodneſs, and, after the Multitude of thy Mercies, hear the Prayer of thy poor Servant, now wan-

wandring in a far and desolate Wilderness; O keep my Soul and deliver me, lead me safe through this Vale of Sorrow and Danger, and conduct me by the Way of Peace and Holiness, to my own Home, even my heavenly Country, the Land of Promise, the Presence and eternal Fruition of my God. *Amen.*

The End of the Third Book.

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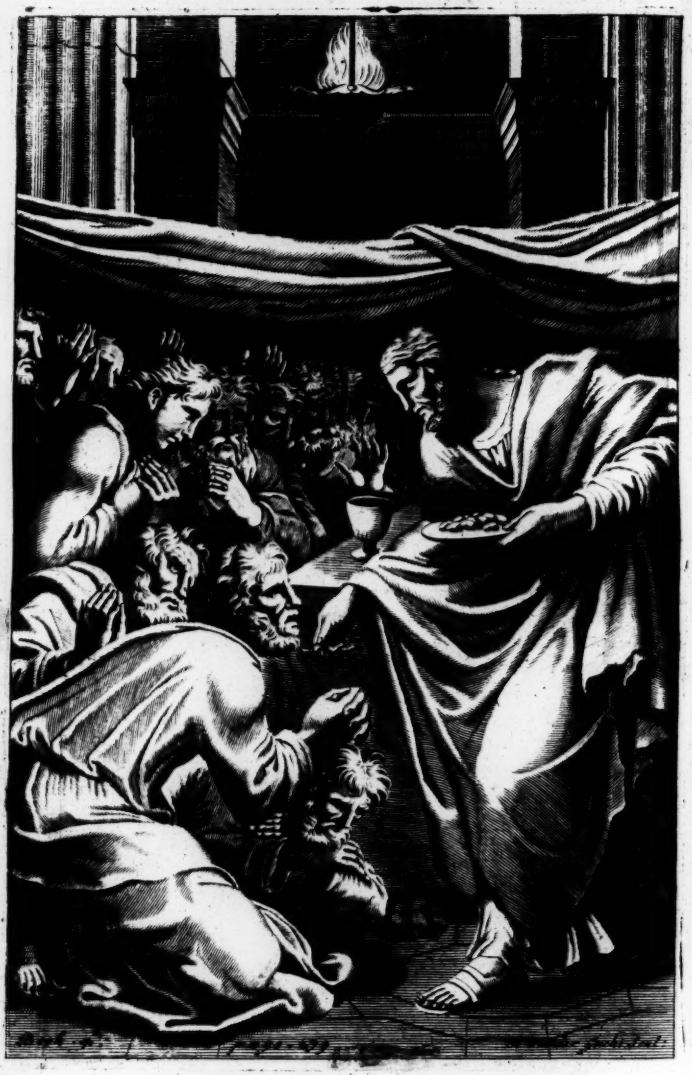

OF THE IMITATION OF Jeſus Chriſt.

The Fourth Book, *Of the Lord's Supper.*

CHAP. I.

The Reverence due to this Holy Sacrament.

The INVITATION.

Chriſt.] "COme unto me, all ye "that labour and are "heavy laden, and I "will refreſh you. The *Matth.* xi. 28. *Joh.* vi. 51. "Bread, that I will give, is my Fleſh, "which I will give for the Life of the "World. Take, eat, this is my Body 1 *Cor.* xi. 24. "which is given for you; This do in re- "membrance of me. He that eateth my *Joh.* vi. 56. "Fleſh, and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth "in Me, and I in Him. The Words -----63.

" which I ſpeak unto you, they are Spirit, and they " are Life.

Diſciple.] Theſe, bleſſed Jeſus, are thy Words, on which my Soul ſecurely reſts it ſelf, becauſe my Saviour, who is Eternal Truth, hath ſpoken them; Theſe the gracious and condeſcending Invitations, which I find ſcattered in Holy Scripture, as occaſions offered for making them. Theſe therefore I will receive with holy Gratitude; with humble but entire Confidence; and grave them upon my Soul in deep and indelible Characters. For though they be Thine, as the Author; yet do I claim a Property in them, and juſtly call them Mine too, as a Perſon, for whoſe Benefit and Salvation thou wert pleaſed to utter them. Moſt gladly therefore will I receive them at thy Mouth, that the Authority of the Divine Speaker may make the more effectual Impreſſion. And Stupid I muſt be beyond imagination, if Encouragements ſo ſweet, ſo kind, do not awaken, and very ſenſibly affect me. But, alas! at the ſame time, that thy Call enclines me to come, my own grievous Tranſgreſſions fly in my Face, and the Terrors of a guilty Conſcience keep me away. Thy Goodneſs, I own, imps my Wings, and bids me boldly attempt the raiſing my Soul to Heaven and Happineſs; but I feel the bitter Remembrance of my Sins checking thoſe Flights, laying me proſtrate upon Earth, reproaching my better Hopes, and nobler Intentions with Preſumption; and ever weighing down my Mind with the intolerable Burden of hainous numberleſs Offences, which render me unworthy the leaſt of all thy Mercies.

In this Perplexity of Thought thou haſt moſt ſeaſonably interpoſed with thy reviving Comforts; haſt made that Faith and Truſt a Virtue and a Duty, which I ſhould have ſhunned as a Crime, and, conſcious of my own Vileneſs, durſt not have entertained. Thou bidſt me raiſe my dejected Looks, and direct my Steps to

to Heaven; and I ſeriouſly deſire, (as who indeed can but deſire?) Life and Glory. Thou exhorteſt me to begin to live immediately, by taking the ſweet Foretaſts of Immortality, in that Bread which is the Food of Souls. Thy kind Invitation therefore I greedily attend to, *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refreſh you.* O charming Sound in the Ears of a Sinner! How joyful is the News, to a poor, loſt, impotent Wretch! One, who in a due Senſe of his own Vileneſs, thinks even the meaneſt of thy Gifts which conduce to his bodily Suſtenance too good for him; To be invited to eat of thy moſt bleſſed Body, and admitted to partake of the lively Figures of thy Divine Blood; the Commemorations of thy Death, and ſure Pledges of Salvation! Lord! what am I, that I ſhould thus be ſuffered to approach thee? nay, rather, that thou ſhould'ſt come to Me, and dwell under my Roof? O unſpeakable Condeſcenſion! O unexampled Kindneſs! Behold the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee, and yet thou vouchſafeſt to take up thy abode with Man, that is a Worm! The Angels are not pure in thy ſight, and yet thou ſayeſt to wretched Sinners, *Come unto me, ye that travel, and are heavy laden.*

I find my ſelf at a loſs, whence ſuch aſtoniſhing Kindneſs ſhould proceed, or what may be the meaning of ſo friendly an Invitation. My Miſdeeds teſtifie againſt me, and I am but too ſenſible, that no Merit of mine could induce my Lord to make it. So far from that, that, even now it is made, I know not with what Face, I can either approach my God and Saviour, or bring him to Me, or hope to keep him there; Him, whom I have ſo often, ſo grievouſly provoked, ſo juſtly made my Enemy for Ever. But, were there no Demerits of my own to diſcourage this Attempt, yet, Who am I, that the Majeſty of Heaven and Earth ſhould ſtoop ſo low, as to enter under my Roof? Be-

hold Angels and Archangels, Principalities and Powers fall down and worſhip thee: Behold, the brighteſt Saints, and Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, tremble at thy Preſence, and yet thou ſay'ſt, *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.* Had this been ſpoke by any Mouth but thine, Men could not have believed it; Had not thy own Command inſpired this Confidence, Sinners durſt not have attempted to move towards thee, but would have rather uſed their utmoſt Induſtry, to flee from the Preſence of their Maſter and Judge. But be it ſo; We are commanded to come to Thee, and thou vouchſafeſt to come to Us. Yet what Solemnity, what Preparation can be ſufficient for thy Reception? *Noah*, that righteous Perſon, employed a Hundred Years, in building an Ark by God's Direction, for the ſaving himſelf and a very few Souls beſides; and how ſhall I be qualified, by the Application of an Hour or two only, to entertain the Maker of the Univerſe, and meet him with that humble Reverence, which is due to ſo terrible, ſo glorious a Creator, from the vileſt and moſt unworthy of all his Creatures? Thy Servant *Moſes*, admitted into familiar Converſation with thee, by a Privilege not imparted to the reſt of Mankind, framed an Ark of Cedar-wood, and overlaid it with pure Gold, to be a fit Repoſitory for the Tables of the Law; and ſhall I, wretched rotten Trunk, take upon me without Ceremony to receive the Almighty Maker and Giver of that Law? *Solomon*, the wiſeſt of Princes, ſpent ſeven Years in building a Magnificent Temple to the Honour of thy Name; Eight Days were taken up in the Dedication of it; a Thouſand Peace-offerings were then ſacrificed upon the new erected Altars; and the Ark of the Covenant with Sound of Trumpet, and much other holy Pomp, was conducted into the Place appointed to receive it; And how unlike to theſe great Saints am I, Duſt and Aſhes, Chief of

of Sinners and Meaneſt of Men? How ſhall I pretend to invite thee my God into my Houſe, who am ſo far from ſpending a number of Years or Days, that I can very hardly afford one poor Half-hour? Nay, would to God that wretched Remnant of one poor Half-hour were but employed, as attentively, as devoutly as it ought to be, to provide thee a clean and acceptable Apartment in this homely Cottage of my Heart. How eager, O my God, how perſevering was the Zeal of thoſe ancient Worthies? how cold, how ſhort is mine, when I ſet my ſelf to prepare for meeting and receiving Thee? My Thoughts, alas! are very rarely conſiſtent, but thouſand Wandrings and impertinent Diſtractions intrude upon me; And hardly can I collect the Powers of my Soul into ſo compoſed a frame, as becomes our more immediate Addreſſes to Thee. I am not unmindful of thy Preſence, then more peculiar than at other times; I reflect upon the Indecency and Sin of ſuffering my Heart to divide it ſelf; I know, that when an Honour ſo great is intended me, as that of Receiving the Lord of Men and Angels, it ought to enlarge and devote its whole Capacity to thee; and yet I cannot fix and fill it with this one Object; but in deſpight of all my Endeavours, and Self-reproaches, Frailty will prevail.

Nay, the ſame Care and Reverence were much too little, where the Dignity of the Thing is ſo much greater. For what Compariſon can there be, between an Ark with its Ceremonial Symbols, and the Myſtical Body of my bleſſed Saviour, with all the wondrous Effects of his Paſſion? How poor and deſpicable were thoſe Legal Sacrifices, whoſe greateſt Excellence and Commendation was, that they typified and foretold That One only perfect and ſufficient Sacrifice upon the Croſs, which in this Sacrament we at once commemorate and apply the Virtue of to our ſelves? If then the Patriarchs and Prophets heretofore expreſt

their Zeal and Devotion, by all the Marks of Reverence and profound Reſpect, to thoſe Figures of the Divine Preſence, and Shadows of Good Things to come; ſhall I be negligent in my Preparations to meet my God himſelf? Shall I not indeed, as much exceed their great Solicitude and pious Affection, which Kings and Peaſants, Rich and Poor, univerſally expreſt, as the ſpiritual Participation of my Lord's Body and Blood, and the moſt precious Pledges of his Love and my Salvation excel the carnal Diſpenſation of a figurative Tabernacle, and the very diſtant and dark Significations of future Bleſſings? They adored the Repreſentation, and ſhall I diſregard the Subſtance, the End, the Perfection of all the Levitical Inſtitution, the Summ of all God's Mercies, and Man's Hopes? If even *David* thought it no Diſparagement to his Royal Character, to lay out his Time, his Study, his Strength, in the Service of the Tabernacle; to compoſe Pſalms for the Worſhip of God, to ſtring his own Harp, and himſelf joyn and preſide in the Conſort; Nay even to dance before the Ark, when brought up to its place, and by his own Example teach his Subjects to exert their utmoſt Might, and employ every Faculty of Body and Soul, in expreſſing their Zeal and Joy: What holy Gladneſs then is due, what enflamed Devotion, to Him, whom *David* in Spirit called Lord? What Songs of Praiſe, and Thanks ſhould adorn that ſolemn Feaſt, where Chriſt exhibits to us the heavenly Manna, the Food of Souls? How ſhould we labour to omit no Teſtimony of our Reverence, no Sign of a hearty Welcome, and an humble Senſe of the unſpeakable Honour this King of Heaven does us, when he vouchſafes to come Home, and dwell in our Hearts; and, by the conſecrated Elements, verily and indeed to give and unite himſelf to every faithful Soul?

See with what eager Zeal vain Men make long Pilgrimages, and fly to the remoteſt Corners of the World,

World, only to gain a Sight of the boasted Reliques of some celebrated Saint; to be entertained with long Accounts of Miracles, to kiss a silken Rag, or prostrate themselves before a Bone set in Gold! But, alas! were all the Legends these fond Men give credit to, most true; yet What is here, that can deserve their mighty Pains, or tedious Journeys? What Shrine can pretend to Sanctifie, or command Veneration, in any degree comparable, to that saving and mystical Presence of God himself upon the Altar? The poor Effects of such mistaken Zeal are but too manifest. Men generally go for Curiosity, and Diversion, not for the Improvement of their Minds; and they return accordingly. Better in no respect, except in having seen a thing much talk'd of, which they had never seen before. 'Tis to be hoped, but few are so blind, so wretchedly deluded, to imagine, that such Penances and painful Travels can do them service, without true Contrition, and serious Reformation of Life. And where These are, much more substantial Advantages may be had a great deal nearer home. For lo! the King of Saints invites us, He gives the sure and blessed Fruits of Righteousness and Salvation, to all who worthily receive him: An Invitation, in compliance with which, Levity and Sensuality, a roving Head, or a gadding Humour have no part; but all is done by the wise and well-weighed Grace of a stedfast Faith; the comfortable Assurances of a devout Hope; and the affectionate Zeal of a sincere and holy Love.

Oh, mighty Maker of the World! whom, though we plainly see in all thy Works of Wonder, yet Thou thy self remainest invisible; how astonishing are thy Dispensations to the Sons of Men? How sweet, how comfortable, how full of efficacy, yet still how unaccountable to Sense and Reason, are the Methods, by which thou art pleased to communicate thy self to the Faithful in this Blessed Sacrament? Where thy cho-

choſen and worthy Servants partake of that heavenly Food, which nouriſhes their Souls to Life immortal; while Reprobates and bold Intruders take empty Elements, void of Spiritual Subſtance, and Saving Power. This is a Myſtery above our Comprehenſion. This kindles in us holy Zeal, and engages our devouteſt Affections. And by receiving Creatures, in themſelves of mean and common Efficacy, we find our Weakneſſes ſtrengthened, our Decays recruited, and our Love of Thee and Virtue ſtrangely heightned and confirmed. Who can expreſs, who can conceive that hidden, that amazing Diſtinction made in this Holy Supper; Whoſe Graces and good Effects are ſo liberally diſtributed to the Faithful; and yet Unbelievers and impenitent Men, have no Portion, no Experience at all of them? Who can diſcover thoſe myſtical Methods, by which Spiritual Grace is conveyed with Bodily Suſtenance? How Bread and Wine ſhould be made Inſtruments of ſtrengthening the Soul; of purging away the Blemiſhes and Reproaches of Nature; healing her Deformities and Diſeaſes; taking out the Stains of Sin and vicious Habits, contracted by converſing with a naughty World; ſubduing furious Paſſions; rectifying and moderating irregular Deſires; and invigorating both the Body and Mind of feeble Sinners at once?

Such is the new Life, and Health, and ſprightly Vigour, which good and godly Men experimentally find upon theſe Occaſions. And Who then can ſufficiently lament the general Lukewarmneſs, the cold Neglect, the ſenſleſs Stupidity of Mankind upon this Occaſion? How regardleſs are They of Chriſt? How hardly prevailed upon, to accept their own Mercy, their Sanctification, their Redemption, in the Ways preſcribed by himſelf for imparting theſe glorious Advantages? How rudely do they turn their Backs upon that Feaſt, which creates Joy in Heaven, and preſerves Earth and its Inhabitants from Miſery and Ruine?

Oh

Oh the wretched Blindneſs, the inflexible Obſtinacy and Hardneſs of Mens Hearts, which will not ſee, or ſeeing will not value ſo ineſtimable Benefits; but turn their very Happineſs into an Occaſion of Deſtruction, by ſuffering the frequent Opportunities, and the very Eaſineſs of attaining theſe precious Privileges, to bring them into general Diſeſteem; which make the Greatneſs of their Maſter's Love, the abundant Proviſion for their Health and Support, a Pretence for ſtarving in the midſt of Plenty.

For I can ſcarce perſwade my ſelf, but that, if this holy Sacrament could be had in one Place, and from one ſingle Hand only, Men would with eager Zeal repair thither, and vaſt Crouds of People ſtrive to partake of ſo rare a Bleſſing. But now, when every Church, and every Feſtival, when every Prieſt, and almoſt every Lord's Day, exhibits this delicious Food, brings it home to our Doors, and offers it to as many as are religiouſly and devoutly diſpoſed to accept the gracious Tenders; when every Sermon exhorts, entreats, conjures us to be thus hpapy; we turn our Backs, and ſlight the cheap, the eaſie Favour. Yet manifeſt it is, that the Kindneſs of our Lord is not the leſs, but much the greater, for putting the Terms of our Salvation within our own Power; and leaving the whole Blame and Condemnation at our own Doors, if we refuſe to take what without our Fault we can never want. And ſhall we then proceed to nauſeate and diſdain our greateſt Bleſſings? to think them leſs valuable for being more common? No, bleſſed Jeſus! We will acknowledge thy unſpeakable Bounty, We will moſt thankfully confeſs thee the good Shepherd, who haſt provided ſuch rich Suſtenance for thy Sheep, and leadeſt them out into fat Paſtures. Bleſſed be thy Eternal Mercy, who vouchſafeſt to give thy Body, not only for, but to, thy poor Servants, in this diſconſolate State: Who, not content to ſacrifice it once

once upon the Croſs, offereſt it daily in the Sacrament; and haſt ſilenced all the Fears, and melancholy Miſgivings of our own Guilt and Unworthineſs, by that moſt tender, and compaſſionate, that moſt extenſive and univerſal Invitation; *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden*, with the Burden of your Sins, *and I will refreſh you.*

Chap. II.

The Love of God to the Soul manifeſted in this Sacrament.

Diſciple.] Behold, Lord, thus encouraged, thus invited, I come; but I do not preſume to do ſo, *truſting in my own Righteouſneſs, but in thy manifold and great Mercies.* I feel, alas! my Weakneſſes and Wants; and betake my ſelf to Thee for Relief: Sick and diſeaſed I fly to the Phyſician of Souls; Hungry and Thurſty, to this Fountain of Living Water, and Bread of Life; Poor and needy to the Bountiful King of Heaven; a Servant to his kind Maſter; a Creature to his compaſſionate Creator, who hateth nothing that he hath made; and a forlorn diſconſolate Wretch, to Thee, the Holy, the Eternal, the Only Comforter. But whence is this to Me, that my God ſhould vouchſafe to come unto me? Or Who am I, that thou ſhould'ſt communicate to me thy own ſelf? How ſhall a wicked Sinner dare to appear before thee? Or how canſt Thou, who art of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, endure to make ſuch condeſcending Approaches, to a Soul polluted with Sin and with Uncleanneſs? Thou ſeeſt my very inward Parts, and knoweſt I have nothing in me that is good, nothing to invite ſuch Mercy, nothing fit for the

the reception of ſo pure, ſo glorious a Majeſty; I will therefore moſt humbly confeſs my own Vileneſs, and Thy unſpeakable Goodneſs; I will moſt thankfully praiſe, and admire, and adore, thy marvellous Love, and exceeding abundant Grace. For this is purely thy own Act. Nothing on my part could deſerve, nothing could move thee to it. The more unworthy I am, the more conſpicuous is thy Goodneſs, the more amazing thy Mercy and Condeſcenſion. Since therefore thou art pleaſed to ſtoop ſo low, be it unto me according to thy Word: Since thou haſt thought fit to command my Approach, I will moſt gladly teſtifie my ready Obedience; and only beg, that my own Sinfulneſs may not render me odious in thy ſight, nor fruſtrate theſe ineſtimable Mercies to me.

O ſweeteſt, kindeſt Saviour! What humble Reverence, what devout Thankfulneſs can be great enough? What Praiſe can be ſufficiently expreſſive of that Love, which admits ſo poor, ſo miſerable a Wretch, to the Participation of thoſe divine Myſteries, the Dignity whereof no Tongue of Men or Angels can worthily ſet forth? But when I thus addreſs to my Lord, and am allowed ſuch intimate Familiarities with him, what ſort of Reflections ought to fill my Breaſt? To approach thee with all the profound Reſpect due upon ſuch Occaſions, is impoſſible; I will therefore ſupply my want of Ability by the earneſtneſs of my Zeal; and moſt humbly beſeech thee to accept thoſe hearty Deſires of the ineſtimable Benefit, by which my Soul and all its Faculties thirſt and pant moſt impatiently after Thee and thy Righteouſneſs. When Thou art the Subject of my Meditations, the Matter is too vaſt for regular Thought; the Ideas too dazling bright for a finite Underſtanding; and I quickly feel my ſelf loſt in Wonder and Aſtoniſhment. I will therefore turn my Eyes inward, and entertain my ſelf with the leſs pleaſing indeed, but not leſs profitable, Proſpect

of

of my own Unworthineſs; Laying my Soul low before thee, and from the ſenſe, how little, how meer a nothing, how much worſe than nothing, I am, will take the meaſure of thy Greatneſs, and form Ideas of thy infinite Goodneſs. I praiſe thee, O my God, from the bottom of my Heart; and extol thy Name for evermore. I deſpiſe and deteſt my ſelf; and with the deepeſt Humility put my Soul into thy Hands, that thy Favour and Grace may exalt me, and make this deſpicable Wretch ſomething, who without thy Mercy is leſs than nothing.

O the wide Extremes! O the unmeaſurable Diſtance! between God, the Eſſence and Perfection of Holineſs, and Man, the very Abſtract of Filth and Sin. Yet does this God extend Compaſſion, and look down with Pity, on Thoſe who are not worthy ſo much as to lift up their Eyes to Him. Yet does he come to Us, delight to be with Us, promiſe to dwell with Us; call, and entreat, and importune Us, to ſit and eat deliciouſly with Him. Invites the Naked and Hungry, the Beggars and Vagabonds to his own Table, feeds them with *Angels Food*, feaſts them with the Bread of Heaven, even that *living Bread which came down from* Heaven, on purpoſe *to give Life unto the World*.

Pſal. lxxviii.

John vi.

O! whence could all this mighty Love proceed? what account can be given of ſuch wonderful Condeſcenſion, ſuch tender Regards to loſt unworthy Creatures? What Thanks, what Praiſe, what humble Adoration do thoſe ſo highly obliged, ſo particularly favoured Creatures owe in return for them? How Wiſe, how Saving was thy Deſign in the firſt Inſtitution of this Holy Supper? How rich, how delightful a Banquet haſt thou prepared for thy Gueſts, by ordering thy own Body and Blood for the myſtical Entertainment of the Faithful? How aſtoniſhing

are

are the Operations of thy Grace and Power! How incomprehenſible the Methods of fulfilling thy moſt true Promiſe! Thou ſpakeſt the Word in the beginning, and all things were created; and by the ſame Almighty Word, thou commandeſt Bread and Wine, and they nouriſh Souls to Life Eternal.

This is indeed a Subject, contrived, not for the Exerciſe of our Reaſon, but of our Faith. We are not able to account for the mighty Efficacy of Elements in their own Nature contemptible and weak. We know not how that God, whom the whole Heavens cannot contain, ſhould dwell in the Hearts of Men; But this we know, that thou haſt promiſed, by and with this Sacrament, to enter into, and abide in, all worthy Receivers; and thy Truth is ſufficient to ſilence and vanquiſh all thoſe imaginary Difficulties, which cavilling and curious Men form to themſelves about it. Come then, and enter; and live, and reign in me for ever; Cleanſe and adorn with thy Grace the Place of thy peculiar Reſidence; Preſerve my Heart and Body free from all Impurity, and remove far away whatever may be offenſive to thy Holy Eyes; Let this Veſſel of mine be conſtantly poſſeſſed in Sanctification and Honour; that, with a peaceful and ſpotleſs Conſcience, I may frequently approach, and eagerly receive theſe adorable Myſteries, which thou haſt appointed, for the Comfort and Salvation of thoſe whom the King of Heaven delights to honour; and for devout and lively Commemorations of thy own moſt bitter, but moſt meritorious and precious Death.

And Thou, my Soul, rejoyce and be exceeding glad for ſo noble a Favour, ſo heavenly a Refreſhment, ſo rich a Conſolation, to ſupport and ſweeten thy Paſſage through this Vale of Tears and Miſery. For, Every time thou attendeſt theſe holy Myſteries, thou *doſt ſpiritually eat the Fleſh of Chriſt, and drink his Blood*; thou

thou doſt act as it were over again the Work of thy Redemption, and with great effect partake of thy Saviour's Merit and Sufferings; For this Love continues always the ſame, and the Excellence and Worth of his Propitiation, is an inexhauſtible Spring of Mercy. Come therefore hither with new exalted Zeal, enlarge thy Heart and its deſires, and doubt not, but thou ſhalt at every approach, return with freſh and plentiful Acceſſions of Grace. Let not the Frequency abate thy Devotion; For This Favour ſhould always ſeem great; This Feaſt always honourable, and the Delights of it always new. And by the Force of Pious Meditation, the Myſtery will affect thy wondring Mind at every Repetition, as if the Son of God were juſt that Moment born from the Womb of his Immaculate Mother; as if thy Suffering Redeemer were in that Inſtant labouring under all his Agonies; and thy own Eyes beheld him hanging, and bleeding, and dying on the Croſs.

Chap. III.

The Benefit of Communicating often.

Diſciple.] Behold, I come to thee, O Lord, deſirous to partake of thy Promiſe, to be enriched with thy Gifts, and feaſted with that Heavenly Banquet, which thy Compaſſion hath prepared for hungry and drooping Souls. I know, O Lord, in Thee is all I need, all I can deſire; my Health and Safety, my Hope and Strength, my Honour and Glory. *Quicken* therefore and Cheriſh *the Soul of thy Servant*, for *unto Thee*, O bleſſed Jeſus, *do I lift up my Soul.* It is my earneſt Longing to receive thee with a becoming Reverence and Devotion; the height of my

my Ambition to bring thee Home to my Houſe; and, with *Zacheus* of old, to be bleſſed, and reckoned by thee among the true Spiritual *Sons of Abraham*. My Soul deſires to be fed and ſtrengthned by thy Body, and my Heart to be entirely knit, inſeparably united, to Thee.

Give me but thy ſelf, and, whatever elſe thou withholdeſt, I am ſatisfied. For all things beſides are miſerable Comforters, and rather aggravate, than abate, my Wretchedneſs. Without thy Conſolations I am not able to ſubſiſt: And therefore feel an abſolute neceſſity of coming to thee often for freſh Supplies of Grace and Strength. My Spirits languiſh and ſink, and, if I faſt too long, I periſh for want of ſeaſonable Recruits from this heavenly Suſtenance. Thy Bowels heretofore yearned over the Multitudes, who came from far to hear thy Saving Doctrine, and be healed of their bodily Diſtempers. Thou would'ſt not ſend them away empty, but wert pleaſed to feed them by a Miracle, leſt they ſhould faint by the way. *Matth.* xv. Extend the ſame Compaſſion towards me, and let this Sacrament ſuſtain my fainting Soul, in this Wilderneſs, barren and remote from any true Comfort. For Thou art the ſweet, the reviving Food of ſinking and weary Spirits, and they who worthily partake of this Repaſt, are nouriſhed unto Life Eternal. I am ſadly ſenſible of my Infirmities, and frequent Relapſes into Sin, and how urgent my Occaſions are for theſe repeated Refreſhments; I quickly cool after my warmeſt Reſolutions; my Purpoſes of Goodneſs ſicken and languiſh apace; and theſe Decays muſt end in Spiritual Death, did not my Prayers, my Self-examinations, my Confeſſions and Holy Sorrows, preparatory to this Holy Feaſt, often return: did not this Divine Suſtenance cleanſe and renew my Affections; confirm my Purpoſes of doing well, excite and enflame my Zeal and Love for God and good Works;

Obſtinate Faſting would not more certainly quench all my vital Heat, and deſtroy my Body, than too long Abſtinence from this Spiritual Food will waſte and quite extinguiſh the Soul and all its Powers of Living Well.

I find, and heartily bewail, a fatal Tendency to Evil, and my Experience, from my very Cradle, ſhews me how ſtrongly I incline to Sin, and fall from bad to worſe, except a Remedy from above check this Indiſpoſition, and ſuccour and ſupport me from plunging into Hell. This Holy Communion is that Remedy, It calls back my wandring Steps, prevents my falling by Relapſe or Neglect, and ſtrengthens me in Grace and Goodneſs. And, if, even in my ſtudied and moſt laboured Devotions, I am ſo often cold, ſo lukewarm at the beſt; How frozen ſhould I be, how inſenſible and dead, were theſe Helps laid aſide, and no ſuch Application uſed to warm and quicken me? Though therefore my Life be not ſo perfect, that I am always in a fit diſpoſition to communicate, yet it ſhall be my Care, at ſolemn and proper Seaſons, not to loſe the Benefit of theſe Holy Myſteries, or ever to refuſe my own Happineſs. For This is the Sovereign Balm of wounded Conſciences; the great Preſervative of decaying Souls; the cheering Comfort of the Faithful, mourning their preſent State of Baniſhment, and groaning earneſtly for a Releaſe from the Afflictions and Infirmities of thoſe mortal Bodies, to which thy Providence hath for a time confined them. And the oftener they thus remember their God, the greater is that Affection, and humble Devotion, with which they court and embrace their beloved Spouſe and Lord.

But oh! how amazing is thy Love? and what is Man whom thou thus vouchſafeſt to viſit? when the great God, the Creator of the World, and Father of the Spirits of all Fleſh does not diſdain to deſcend into

into a poor Soul? and fill the hungry Wretch with all his Fatneſs? Happy that Breaſt, which is thus honoured, and unſpeakable the Joy with which it overflows! How glorious a Maſter, how agreeable a Gueſt, how pleaſant a Companion, how faithful a Friend, how beautiful, how honourable, how charming a Husband does it entertain and embrace? Let Heaven and Earth, and all their boaſted Excellencies keep ſilence before him; for if I have my Jeſus, I have All; For I have him from whom all other things derive their Excellence; And Their borrowed precarious Perfections can miniſter no Joy, can make no Happineſs, without this great Original. They in themſelves are nothing, they are but what he made them, and He alone is more, incomparably more and better, than all that ever was, or could be, made.

Chap. IV.

The Pleaſures of Devout Communion.

Diſciple.] PRevent me, I moſt humbly beſeech thee, my Lord and my God, with the Bleſſings and Graces of thy Holy Spirit, that thy Servant may taſte thy Sweetneſs, and approach this precious Feaſt, with ſuch Reverence and Zeal, and fervent Devotion, as thou wilt be pleaſed to accept. O viſit me with thy Salvation, and awaken me from Spiritual Sloth and Slumber; that I now may vigorouſly apply my ſelf to draw and drink the living Water contained in this Fountain opened for Sin and for Uncleanneſs. Inlighten the Eyes of my Mind, that I may ſee the wondrous Things of this thy Inſtitution; and ſtrengthen my Faith, that I may firmly and without ſcruple believe and expect thoſe Operations, which my Rea-

ſon is not able to account for. And why indeed ſhould I make any difficulty to believe what I cannot comprehend and trace the dark Footſteps of, when I remember, that it is not the Act of finite feeble Man, but the Work of an Almighty God; not an Invention or Project of Humane Reaſon, but the Inſtitution and Promiſe of Him, who worketh all things according to the wiſe and wonderful Counſel of his own unbounded Will? To fathom theſe Depths to the bottom were an Attempt impracticable, even to the refined Underſtanding of an Angel; Well then may poor ſhort-ſighted Man turn giddy at the ſight of this Abyſs, and confeſs the Well too deep, and the Cordage too ſhort. Such and no better is the Condition of the moſt exalted Saints, and what can I, the feebleſt even of Men, vile ſinful Duſt and Aſhes, hope to diſcover by my moſt induſtrious Search into theſe heavenly Myſteries?

Inſtead therefore of nice Reaſoning and unprofitable Diſputes, I will approach with ſingleneſs of Heart, with firm and holy Hope, with an undoubting Faith, and profound Reverence; And, whatever the Vanity of worldly Wiſdom may ſuggeſt to the contrary, will not queſtion but thou art preſent in the Sacrament, though I cannot ſatisfie the captious Enquirers after the particular manner of that Preſence. Thy Humane and Divine Nature are inſeparable, thus much I know; and no more but this, that thou art ſo preſent as God, as not to contradict thy being Man. 'Tis upon this account, that thou art pleaſed to command my receiving thee, and haſt engaged to make me One with thy ſelf, by the ſtricteſt Union of a Holy Love. Shed therefore, I pray thee, thy ſpecial Grace into my Heart, that I may diſſolve in this holy Fire, and become intirely thine; Purge off my Droſs, and let me no more endure the Allay of any baſer Mixtures. For this Sacrament is the pureſt, the nobleſt Refi-

Refiner of Souls, the Health of the whole Man, the Reſtorative of Spiritual Decays, the Cure of Vice, the Curb of Paſſions, the Antidote againſt Troubles and Temptations; the Conveyance of greater Grace; the Increaſe of imperfect Virtue; the Stay of Hope; the Support of our Faith, and the mighty Incentive of our Charity.

Who can expreſs the manifold, the aſtoniſhing Benefits, which thou frequently impartest to thy beloved, and religious Servants, by communicating in this bleſſed Supper? even thou, my God, the Cheriſher of my Soul, the Repairer of my Breaches by Infirmity and Sin, and Reſtorer of my inward Comfort and Peace. By This thou ſuſtaineſt them in Sadneſs and Affliction, and enableſt them to walk upon the Waves of a troubleſome World; by This thou cheereſt their Melancholy and Diſtruſt, and raiſeſt up their ſinking Spirits with Aſſurance of thy gracious Protection and Aſſiſtance; by This thou reneweſt their Nature, and purifieſt their Affections, that They, who came at firſt to this Table, with great Loathneſs and Dulneſs, feel a new Warmth within, and by degrees are brought to frequent it with unſpeakable Reliſh and Delight. Theſe happy and glorious Effects thou produceſt by ſuch uncommon, unlikely Means, that Men may find experimentally their own Infirmities; how little they are able to do of themſelves, and how much, when ſtrengthened by Thee. That they are cold, inſenſible, ſtupid and dead to all religious Duties, is from their own Diſpoſition; that they are zealous in good Works, cheerful in thy Service, devout in thy Worſhip, is purely Thy Gift. And ſure none can come hither with tolerable Attention, but he muſt return with ſome Improvement. For who can lye at the Fountain-head, and not receive ſome Tincture from the Sweetneſs of the Spring? Who can ſtand cloſe to the Fire, and feel no heat? But thou art a Fountain

ever full, ever overflowing; Thou art the Fire, whose Flames are constantly expanding themselves, to kindle holy Affections in all those, who are careful to approach, and put themselves in the way of their Activity.

It may be, I am not worthy to drink at the Head of this Spring, or to take my fill of its refreshing Streams; but yet at least I will apply my Mouth to some of its distant Pipes and spreading Rills, to catch a few of the Drops, as they slide by, that I be not utterly barren, nor dye with Drought and Thirst. I may not be able to approach this Flame so near, that it should refine and brighten me to a degree equal with the Purity of the Cherubim and Seraphim; but yet I will not despair of being so far cherished and warmed by it, that my Zeal may be exalted according to the brightness of Humane Virtues; And my enlivened Heart shall feel some glowings, if it do not flame out heavenly clear. Defects and Infirmities, I know, I cannot be exempted from; But what is wanting I beg my merciful Jesus would supply. His Kindness will not fail to make all equitable Allowances, and his Wisdom knows where they are proper to be made. Forgiven and made up they may be, and I, unworthy as I am, may be accepted. But that Unworthiness must not be made a Pretence for detaining me from this Sacrament. For sure the most unworthy are comprehended, and They who see, and lament, that they are such, can least of all be excluded, when he pronounces that general Invitation, *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

The oftener I descend into my self, the more I am convinced, that this Description exactly suites my State. I fulfil the primitive Sentence upon fallen Man, and labour in the Sweat of my Face; The Sorrows of my Heart perplex and *Gen.* iii.

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diſtract me, the Burden of my Sins preſſes me down, the Multitude of my Temptations are a perpetual Torment and Vexation, the Variety and Exorbitance of my corrupt Affections entangle, and confound, and over-power my Reaſon; And in the midſt of theſe Calamities and Dangers, I have no Succour, no Defence, no Supporter or Deliverer, but only Thee, my God; And therefore into thy Hands, my merciful Maker and Saviour, I commit my ſelf, and all my Affairs; and beg that thou would'ſt keep what is thus depoſited with thee, ſafe unto Life Eternal. O take me therefore into thy Cuſtody; and, as thou haſt ordained thy Body and Blood to be the Food of Immortality, ſo grant, that it may have its proper Efficacy upon my Soul in particular, to the Glory of thy Name, and the Honour of ſo bleſſed an Inſtitution. And, that no Neglect or Unfruitfulneſs of mine may obſtruct its kindly and powerful Operations, Grant, I beſeech thee, my God and Saviour, that I may never be guilty of ſuch Diſreſpect, as wilfully to turn my Back upon thy Table; but may earneſtly long for, heartily rejoyce in, and diligently comply with, every Opportunity of receiving this mighty Bleſſing; and may ſo frequent, and ſo improve under, thy merciful Diſpenſation, that I may conſtantly return, with greater Care and Zeal, more ſettled Reſolutions, more irreconcilable Hatred againſt Sin, and more fervent Love for God and Goodneſs, than before. So ſhall I approach nearer to thee indeed, and each Sacrament prove a freſh Advance toward Heaven; So ſhall my Soul be filled with the Treaſures of thy Mercy, the Delights of thy Secret Ones, and the raviſhing Foretaſts of that Bliſs, which ſhall be always growing, till it be conſummated at laſt, in that Eternal Feaſt above, the Marriage-ſupper of the Lamb in thy Kingdom. *Amen.*

Chap. V.

The Dignity of the Sacrament, and Honour of the Prieſthood.

Chriſt.] IF Thou ſeeſt the Table richly furniſhed, and art deſirous to feaſt upon theſe dainty Meats, let that Deſire be duly tempered with Reverence and holy Fear; For know, that if thou hadſt the Purity of an Angel, or the mortified Piety of *John* the Baptiſt, yet even thus thou could'ſt not deſerve ſo divine a Bleſſing; but ought'ſt to acknowledge it a mighty Favour and Condeſcenſion, that thou art admitted to receive, and taſt, or even to touch, this bleſſed Sacrament. That Man ſhould conſecrate thoſe Elements, and by pronouncing a ſet Form of Words introduce a new Efficacy, and give them a myſtical Power, which Nature neither did, nor could provide them with before; that the Perſons preſent ſhould eat the Bread of Angels, and be filled with heavenly Food by virtue of ſuch Conſecration; Theſe are not the Effect of any extraordinary Merit in them who ſanctifie, or who receive, thoſe Creatures of Bread and Wine, but the pure and ſole effect of Mercy and Grace. The Greatneſs of the Myſtery does indeed magnifie the Prieſtly Office, and Men ought to pay a more than common Reſpect to thoſe Perſons, whom God hath honoured with a Privilege, not imparted to the very Angels themſelves. For They who are regularly ordained in the Church, are the only Perſons, by whoſe Miniſtry God gives the Body of his Son to us. They are the Perſons acting by his Commiſſion, they uſe the Form appointed by Chriſt himſelf, and have a conſtant mighty Effect attending upon their due Adminiſtration. But ſtill our Thoughts and Wonder muſt not terminate in Them, as if by

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their own Power and Holineſs they could bring ſuch things to paſs. For They are only Inſtruments; and therefore we muſt carry our Meditations farther, up as high as God himſelf, for he is the firſt and principal Cauſe, he the inviſible Worker of this Miracle of Mercy; It is His Word, which made and governs all Things, that only can command material and common Elements to produce ſpiritual and extraordinary Effects, and ſtrengthen and refreſh the Souls of the Faithful by the Body and Blood of Chriſt; at the ſame time, and with as certain operation, as their Bodies are ſtrengthened and refreſhed by the Bread and Wine.

When therefore thou approacheſt the Chriſtian Altar, reſt not in the Teſtimony of thy Senſes, nor dwell upon the *outward and viſible Signs*; but let thy Faith carry thee on to *the inward and ſpiritual Grace*, and exerciſe it ſelf in contemplating the Almighty Power of God. And Thou, to whom the invoking this Power and its efficacious Preſence is committed, ſee that thou do it with awful Reverence and godly Fear. Conſider whoſe Servant thou art, and what a glorious Character thou haſt received by Impoſition of the Biſhop's Hands. For thou art ordained a Prieſt for noble and religious Purpoſes; The Excellence of thy Office conſiſts in giving thy Maſter's Family their Portion of Meat in due manner, and ſeaſon: Be faithful therefore in the Execution of this weighty Truſt; Proceed in it with a fervent and exemplary Devotion, and let it be thy firſt Care to offer up thy ſelf an unreprovable Sacrifice to God. Do not imagine any part of thy Privilege to conſiſt in an Exemption from the Duties incumbent upon common Chriſtians. Alas! thy Burden is not leſs but greater, thy Temptations more and fiercer, thy Danger more imminent, for being thus diſtinguiſhed. For it will be expected, that the Sanctity of Thy Manners, the Severity of Thy Vir-

Virtue, the Conqueſt of Thy Paſſions, the Perfection of Thy Holineſs, the Fervency and Zeal of Thy Devotion, ſhould diſtinguiſh thee, as viſibly, as eminently, as thy Garb and thy Profeſſion do. That Thou ſhould'ſt be clothed and adorned with that Righteouſneſs, that Innocence, that Gravity, of which thy Robe is a ſignificant Emblem; and, as thou art become a Leader, thou ſhould'ſt likewiſe be a Pattern to the Flock. For the Converſation of ſuch Perſons ſhould be no longer conformable to the Cuſtoms and corrupt Examples of the World, but confined to the Angels in Heaven, or to the Saints that excel in Virtue upon Earth.

When thou entreſt into the Holy Place, and there put'ſt on the Garments of thy Function, conſider what thou art going about, and how high a Place thou haſt obtained; No leſs, than to be the Repreſentative of the great High-Prieſt in Heaven, and to Miniſter in his ſtead unto his People. Firſt therefore, with all Humility, bewail thy Own Unworthineſs, and confeſs thy Own Sins; then with a moſt extenſive Charity, and tender Compaſſion, bewail, and intercede for, the Sins of Others. Look upon thy ſelf as a Mediator between God and Tranſgreſſors; to offer up Their Prayers, Confeſſions, and Thankſgivings to Him; and to hand down His Pardon and Bleſſings to Them. And be not ſlothful or unthinking, careleſs or cold in this Affair; For it is moſt important, and requires thy moſt diligent Attention, thy moſt earneſt Importunity, thy moſt indefatigable Perſeverance; never to be abated, till thou have gained thy Point, and prevailed for Mercy and Grace, by thoſe reſolute Wreſtlings with God. But, when thou celebrateſt the Holy Supper, remember, thou art about a Work, which all Heaven and Earth are concern'd in. A Work, which, when performed as it ought, brings Honour to God, Joy to the bleſſed Angels, Edification to the

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Church of Christ, Converſion to Sinners, Peace to wounded Conſciences, Comfort to the Afflicted, Strength to the Feeble, and to thy ſelf Abundance of Grace, and an exceeding great Reward.

Chap. VI.

An Act of Preparation before the Sacrament.

Diſciple.] Behold, Lord, with thy wonted Mercy, the Doubts and Confuſions of my troubled Breaſt. For, when I look up to Heaven, and conſider the Majeſty of my Great, my Holy, God; and from thence draw my Eyes back upon my ſelf, and view my own Vileneſs and horrible Sinfulneſs, I am all Perplexity and Diſtraction, and Horrour. Thou biddeſt me come; And, if I refuſe or neglect to comply with that gracious Invitation, I forſake my own Mercy, and deprive my ſelf of Life and Happineſs: But if I come unworthily, I am equally miſerable, and ſhall be puniſhed for the high Indignity, of bringing ſo polluted a Gueſt, to ſo pure and heavenly a Feaſt. What Courſe then ſhall I take to be ſafe, when Danger and Death threaten on either hand? I will even fly to thee, my God, and, inſtead of conſulting with Fleſh and Blood, or hearkening to the deceitful Inſinuations of my too raſh, or too timorous Reaſon, will ask Counſel of Thee, my infallible and only Oracle in Difficulties, my never-failing Help in Neceſſities and Diſtreſſes.

Teach me, I beſeech thee, the right Way, and lead me in ſuch Methods of Holy Preparation, as may be proper and ſuitable to ſo exalted an Act of Religion. I know that theſe Approaches to thee in the Bleſſed Sacrament are exceeding beneficial and delightful; but

but make me know withal, in what manner thou muſt be approached, to render that which is deſirable in it ſelf ſafe and profitable to Me in particular. Give me, I beſeech thee, a due Senſe of the Greatneſs of the Myſtery, and the Excellence of thy Mercy in it; and, conſequent to that, fill my Soul with pure and holy Affections, with earneſt Longings, with godly Sorrow, with ſincere and ſtedfaſt Reſolutions, with profound Reverence, and ardent Devotion, that my Heart may be a clean, though homely, Receptacle for my Saviour, ſuch as he will not diſdain; and I ſo well-diſpoſed a Gueſt at this Divine Feaſt, this Spiritual Sacrifice, that thou may'ſt bid me welcome to thy Table, and the Food I receive there may nouriſh me up to Health and Life Eternal. *Amen.*

CHAP. VII.

Of Self-examination.

Chriſt.] *ABove all keepings keep thy* Heart, and, whether Prieſt, or private Chriſtian, take good heed, that at thy coming to my Holy Table, thy Devotion conſiſt not in outward Geſture, and Pomp and Shew only. I am not to be impoſed upon with ſuch empty Formalities, but require an upright, humble, and devout Mind, a Mind low and proſtrate as thy Body, a ſtedfaſt Faith, and pure Intention, and unfeigned Zeal for God's Honour. Therefore, before thou preſume to approach, examine well how thou art qualified: Search every Corner of thy Conſcience, and do thy utmoſt to purge and caſt out all Remains of the old Leaven. Let no Sin unrepented of reproach thee; No Luſt unmortified divide thy Affections, and hinder thy free and entire Reſignation to my Will.

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Conceive a juſt Hatred and Indignation againſt all thy Sins in general; and for thoſe, which are either too groſs to be overlooked, or too habitual to be forgotten, expreſs a particular and proportionable Reſentment of Sorrow and Shame. And if thou have Time and Leiſure, look well into the Irregularities of all thy Paſſions, and in thy private Retirements make a full Confeſſion of them, between God and thy own Soul.

Recollect and bewail the unhappy Prevalence of worldly and carnal Affections; every exorbitant Deſire, every ungoverned Paſſion: Obſerve, how the Motions of evil Concupiſcence abound and domineer; how unguarded thou art in thy outward Behaviour, and the general Courſe of thy Converſation; how eaſily thou art ſeduced by Vanity; how vehemently diſpoſed to the Gratifications of Appetite and Senſe; how careleſs and ſtupid in the weightier Concerns of thy Soul; how apt to let thy ſelf looſe to Laughter and extravagant Mirth, and how exceeding loth to mourn for thy Sins with a true, ſaving, and neceſſary Contrition; how eagerly thou purſueſt the Pleaſures and Advantages of the Body, and how heavy and ſlothful thou art in the Exerciſes of Mortification and godly Zeal; How mighty curious and inquiſitive after News and Trifles, and greedy to be entertained with every Pomp and Beauty that can pleaſe thy Sight; but how Negligent and Backward, how full of Diſregard and Diſdain, to Things of leſs gay Appearance, but of true inward Worth, and mighty Conſequence to thy better State; How greedy of Gain, how ſparing in thy Alms, how tenacious of this World's Goods; How inconſiderate in thy Diſcourſe, how childiſh and trifling, how wicked or obſcene; how laviſh and profuſe; and what a Torment is it to *ſet a Guard before thy Mouth, and keep the Door of thy Lips*; How affected or extravagant in thy Behaviour, how eager in thy Actions, how inordinate in Pſalm cxli.

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thy Appetites; but how ſlow and deaf to the Word of God, how negligent in hearing, and how inflexible to be perſwaded by what thou haſt heard; how prone to Reſt and Eaſe, and how averſe to Labour and neceſſary Care; How wakeful and attentive at Plays, or Balls, and how drowſie and lifeleſs in Prayer and holy Duties; how impatient till they are done; and how full of wandring and impertinent Thoughts, while they are in doing; How eaſily diverted from thy ſtated Hours of Devotion; how lurkewarm in receiving the bleſſed Sacrament, how unfixed in thy Mind at the very time of communicating, and how barren and unprofitable afterwards; How ſoon provoked to Anger upon every ſlight Miſcarriage, and yet how apt to give Offence to others: how prone to judge, and ſeverely cenſure, thy Brethren: how ſtiff and poſitive in thoſe Judgments and hard Conſtructions: How inſolent and immoderately exalted with good Fortune, and how feeble and dejected under every Croſs or Diſappointment: How full of good Intentions, and how few of thoſe Intentions have any good effect.

Theſe, and many other Defects, of which each Man's own Conſcience can beſt inform him, it is thy Duty to enquire into very nicely; to bewail ſeriouſly; to confeſs with the profoundeſt Humility, and with firm purpoſe of amendment for the time to come. When This is done, then, without any ſecret Reſerve to thy own Inclinations, reſign thy ſelf up entirely to God to be governed by him, and offer to the glory of his Name, *thy Soul and Body, a holy, living, and reaſonable Sacrifice:* Thus ſhalt thou come to me worthily, and receive my myſtical Body to thy infinite advantage.

For there is no other Satisfaction in Man's Power to make for his great Affronts, and manifold Provocations, againſt the Majeſty on High; No Oblation more acceptable, than that of a *broken and contrite*, a pure

pure and upright Heart, offered to God in this Sacrament. He desires nothing but thy self, and he desires this, not for his own, but thy sake. He who brings it let him not doubt Acceptance; for God never despises or rejects a true Penitent, but embraces returning Prodigals, with the Tenderness of a Father; and grants them Pardon for the past, and Grace for the future. His Word, his Oath is passed, and He who cannot lye may securely be depended upon. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live*; and *At what time soever the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness which he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive*; *Repent therefore, and turn your selves from all your Transgressions, and so Iniquity shall not be your ruine. For I will be merciful to your Unrighteousnesses, and your Sins and Infirmities will I remember no more.* Ezek. xviii. Heb. viii.

Chap. VIII.

Christ dyed for us, that We should live to Him.

Christ.] Behold and take Example by Me. I hung upon the Cross with a naked Body, and stretched-out Arms, and thus offered my self to my Father for thy Sins. No part of me remained, which was not given in atonement to appease the Wrath of thy justly incensed Judge. And Thou in like manner must think it thy Duty, freely and wholly to give up thy self, a clean and holy Sacrifice. Every Power, every Affection of the Soul must be consecrated to Me in the blessed Sacrament. What doth the Lord require of thee, but to consult thy own Interest, and save thy

thy ſelf by conveying over thy ſelf to Me? Whatever elſe thou dedicateſt to my Service, is of no value, no conſideration with me; for I ſeek not Thine but Thee.

As all the World beſides would fail of procuring thy Happineſs and Satisfaction, if deprived of Me; ſo all thy Wealth and Gifts ſet apart for my uſe, can never be well-pleaſing in my ſight, unleſs with Them thou giveſt thy own ſelf. My whole Perſon was ſacrificed for thy Redemption; either of my Natures ſingle had been inſufficient to propitiate for thy Sins; My whole Body and Blood is ſet upon my Table for thy Entertainment; and what can be the meaning of all this, but that I ſhould be entirely thine, and Thou entirely mine? But if thou art not ſincere in this Oblation, if it be made with any *Proviſo's* and Exceptions, the Offering is not perfect, the Sacrifice is maimed, defective in its Parts, and the Union, which ſhould follow upon it, muſt be proportionably lame and imperfect. The firſt thing therefore to be taken care of is the liberal and full Reſignation of thy Perſon, This muſt recommend and ſanctifie all thy other Acts of Religion; and, till thou art releaſed from the Bondage of divided Affections, thou canſt not attain Grace and true Liberty. Hence it is, and upon no other account, that, of ſo many Profeſſors and ſeemingly good Chriſtians, ſo very few ſtand faſt in the Liberty with which Chriſt hath made Men free. The Condition is fix'd and irreverſible, *If a Man forſake not all that he hath, he cannot be my Diſciple.* And therefore if thou deſire to be found in this happy Number, enter my Courts with a Free-will Offering, and conſecrate every Inclination, every Faculty of thy Soul. Have no love, no deſires, but mine, *Submit thy ſelf wholly to my Holy Will and Pleaſure, and ſtudy to ſerve me truly in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs, all the Days, and in all the Actions, of thy Life.*

Luke xiv.

CHAP.

Chap. IX.

An Act of Self-Reſignation.

Diſciple.] IT *is very meet, right, and my bounden Duty,* that I ſhould do as thou requireſt: For this, O Lord, is but to give thee of thy own. Heaven and Earth are thine, and all that therein is. I deſire, with ſingleneſs of Heart, to dedicate my ſelf to Thee, never to retract the Gift, but continue thine for ever. Accept me therefore, entirely devoted to thy Service from this Day forward, a Sacrifice of Praiſe and perpetual Thankſgiving. I call thoſe bleſſed Spirits to witneſs, who, though inviſible to Humane Eyes, conſtantly aſſiſt at our Solemn Acts of Religious Worſhip: Humbly beſeeching thee, that the Oblation of thy dear Son's bleſſed Body, repreſented in this Sacrament, may be effectual for the Salvation of Me, and of all thy faithful People.

I offer to thee, Lord, my manifold Sins and Tranſgreſſions, my corrupt Inclinations and vicious Habits, which, from my Youth up until now, have ſo grievouſly provoked thy Wrath and juſt Indignation, to be a whole burnt Sacrifice. Slay them, O Lord, before thy Altar, and conſume them in the Fire of thy Love, that not any the leaſt Spot of Guilt may remain behind. Purge my Conſcience from their Stain, and wipe out their very Remembrance. Reſtore to me thy Grace, which my Sins and wilful Neglects have ſo often forfeited; Give *me the comfort of thy Help again*, and *ſtabliſh me with thy free* thy renewing *Spirit*; and, having ſealed a full Pardon for what is paſt, receive me to thy fatherly Embraces, and aſſure me of thy Affection by a Kiſs of Reconciliation and Peace. Pſalm li.

What Satisfaction can I make for all my Injuries and bold Affronts to thy righteous Laws, but that alone of humble Confeſſion, deep Sorrow, and hearty Prayers for thy acceptance of thy Son's Atonement? I do moſt heartily bewail and deteſt all my Wickedneſs, and, by thy Grace, will never be guilty of the like any more; I do, and will to the laſt Minute of my Life, grieve for theſe Follies, and am deſirous by my future Carriage, to teſtifie the Truth of my Repentance, and make the beſt Reparation I am able for the Scandal I have given formerly. O Lord, pardon; O Lord, forgive; defer not for thy own ſake, O my God; but let thy Mercy be glorified in ſparing the Soul of thy Servant, whom thou haſt redeemed with thy moſt precious Blood. Behold, I commit my ſelf wholly to thy Mercy, and depoſite my Spirit in thy Hands. O deal with me according to thy great Goodneſs, and not after my Sins and grievous Wickedneſs.

To Thee I humbly offer all in me that is good. A very poor imperfect Offering I with ſhame confeſs it; but, worthleſs as it is, I beg thou wilt accept it; Supply my Defects, ſanctifie and exalt what is debaſed with Infirmity or impure Mixtures; diſdain not my ſincere, though weak, Endeavours; and enable me daily to do better; and raiſe at laſt this ſlothful, unprofitable Creature to ſuch degrees of Virtue and ſucceſsful Activity, as may, by the more diligent uſe of thy Grace, end in a bleſs'd and bright Eternity.

I alſo offer up to Thee, the Prayers and good Wiſhes of all that have interceded for Me, or deſired my Interceſſions for Them: The Neceſſities and Diſtreſſes of my Friends and Relations, and all that have done good to Me, or Others, for thy ſake; imploring that thou would aſſiſt them by thy Grace, comfort them in their Troubles, protect them in all Dangers, deliver them from Puniſhment and Death Eternal, and ſo reſcue them from all Evil, that they may magnifie thy good

good Providence, and with thankful Hearts rejoyce in thy Mercy.

In a more particular manner, accept, I beſeech thee, of my moſt hearty Prayers, and Peace-offerings, for All, who have injured Me in Word or Deed, created me any Diſturbance by ill Treatment, ſlandered or reviled me with ill Language, or given me any manner of Uneaſineſs, or angry Reſentment. And likewiſe, for all whom I have injured, grieved, or offended, by Word or Deed, knowingly or ignorantly, with or without deſign: Entreating thy Forgiveneſs for all that hath been done or taken amiſs on either ſide. Take away, Thou who loved'ſt and dyed'ſt for thy Enemies, all Rancour and Malice, all Grudges and revengeful Thoughts, all paſſionate Remembrances and Diſpoſition to Striſe and Debate, all that may be inconſiſtent with true Charity, or tend to the decay of brotherly Love. Have Mercy, Lord, on all, who ſue for Mercy; ſupply the Needs of all that want; and grant us all ſuch Meaſures of thy Grace, and ſo firm Perſeverance in it, that we may grow up to ſuch Degrees as this mortal State is capable of here, and receive our perfect Conſummation and Bliſs, both in Body and Soul, in thy Eternal and Everlaſting Glory. *Amen.*

Chap. X.

The Sin and Miſchief of Abſenting from the Lord's Supper.

Chriſt.] IT is by no means ſufficient, that Men do Once, or very Rarely, repair to this Holy Sacrament; but, as their Occaſions and Neceſſities are frequent, ſo ſhould their Care in ſeeking Supplies be. The Paſſions of the Soul are daily in commotion, and

its Diſeaſes and evil Habits get ground by their malignant ſpreading Quality; The Temptations of the Devil are ſeldom intermitted, or, if they be, 'tis only out of wicked Subtlety, that even thoſe Intervals of Quiet may contribute the more effectually to Mens ruine; And if this be, as moſt aſſuredly it is, thy Caſe, think then, how urgent thy Wants are, and how frequent thy Returns ought to be to this Fountain of Divine Grace. That Here thou may'ſt drink living Water and quench the raging Feavers of thy Soul, that Here thou may'ſt receive Balm into thy Wounds, and apply proper Remedies to thy ſeveral Indiſpoſitions; that thou may'ſt grow more wiſe and weary by ſuch Recollections, more clearly underſtand thy own State, by thoſe Examinations which prepare thee for my Table, and, by repeating this holy Meal, be ſtrengthened againſt the Aſſaults of the Enemy, and more upon thy Guard againſt his ſubtle Inſinuations. And One of His Inſinuations it certainly is, to hinder and draw Men off from Communicating often; As being very ſenſible how great and happy Advantages they reap by doing ſo; And that this is the very beſt Courſe they can poſſibly take, of ſecuring themſelves, and defeating his malicious Endeavours to debauch and deſtroy their Souls.

For this reaſon Men are not to think it ſtrange, if they find the Devil then more eſpecially buſie, when they ſet themſelves with a more than common Earneſtneſs to the Preparation for, or the Exerciſe of, the moſt ſolemn and exalted Acts of Religion. For this wicked Spirit, as the Hiſtory of *Job* intimates, is always induſtrious to mingle himſelf with the Sons of God, when they appear before their heavenly Father. He contrives then to give them great Diſturbance, to damp their Joys, and break their holy Purpoſes, by ſuggeſting many Fears, and diſtracting their Minds with unneceſſary Scruples: He terrifies them with *eating and drinking their own Damna-*

Job i.

Damnation, and keeps them back by miſtaken Notions of their Unworthineſs and Danger. If he can thus prevail, either for a total Neglect of this Sacrament, or contrive, that they ſhall come full of Doubts and Diſſatisfaction, he gains his Point. But be not ignorant of his Devices; Inform thy ſelf rightly of thy Duty, wherein Unworthineſs does truly conſiſt; that nothing but want of Sincerity and due Reverence can bring thee into hazard, and then deſpiſe his vain Attempts to diſcompoſe and evacuate thy good Intentions. Retort his wicked Craft back upon his own Head, by being more vigilant, more careful, more reſolved; but by no means omit this Duty, nor ſuffer thy ſelf to be drawn off from that Communion, which is the Sovereign Antidote, the beſt Preſervative, againſt Sin and Temptation.

If he labour to diſguiſe his deviliſh Arts, under the ſpecious colour of Caution and Humility and want of more perfect Devotion, Lay aſide thy unprofitable and diſquieting Anxieties and flee for Succour and Advice to ſome godly Paſtor. Let His Prudence direct thy doubting Steps; and unboſom thy ſelf freely to Him, that by confeſſing thy Sins, and opening thy Caſe to the Phyſician of Souls, thou may'ſt receive the Benefit of ghoſtly Counſel, and the Comfort of Abſolution. Know, that no Sin can hurt thee, or render thee an unworthy Receiver, when once confeſs'd, and ſeriouſly repented of: And that, when this is done, all thy Doubts and Perplexities hinder the Grace of God, and check thy Improvement in Piety and Devotion. Let not any ordinary Trouble or Affliction deterr thee from coming to thy Lord for relief; but make the greater haſte to reconcile thy ſelf to God, and purge away thoſe Offences, which may have provoked, and drawn down the Affliction upon thee. Let not any Difference between Thee and thy Brethren detain thee; for there is a ſhort and ready way of removing this Obſtruction, by Forgiving and Praying

for those who have grieved or injured Thee; and by reconciling thy self and asking Pardon of those whom Thou hast offended. And, if They still be so perverse, as not to be reconciled upon a due Submission; Yet consider, that Their Obstinacy and Wickedness ought to be no obstruction to the performance of thy Duty; Thou hast done thy part, and God will be sure to forgive and accept thy Person, though Men do not.

What benefit can a Man possibly propose to himself from the putting off Examination and Repentance, and forbearing to come to the Holy Communion? Most certainly, when one is diseased, the greatest Wisdom is to get well again as soon as possibly he can: To expel the Malignity, and discharge the Venom immediately; Thus will the Cure be easier, more speedy, more successful. For every Delay adds to the Distemper, and gathers fresh and more obstinate Matter. If you omit the present Opportunity upon One Pretence, Another and more prevailing may interpose, and deprive you of the next. And thus by degrees you will be wrought upon to excuse your self again and again, and by longer Abstinence become less fit, as well as less willing, to return to your Duty. Whatever Burden then you find upon your Mind, get quit of it betimes; do not indulge your Sloth and Backwardness a Moment; for there can never come any good of prolonging your Cares and Troubles, and making the common Hindrances of worldly Business, a reason for neglecting your great, your eternal Interest. This is most manifest, and Experience will prove the truth of it, when it is too late; that the longer you defer Communicating, the less you will find your self disposed to it, and a strange Carelessness and Disregard for holy Exercises will insensibly creep upon your Mind, and get a mighty head. But, which is a most lamentable thing to consider, many loose and

and diſſolute, nay many thoughtleſs and lukewarm People, allow themſelves in this Indifference; and induſtriouſly ſeek Pretences to defer their Repentance and Approaches to the Lord's Table, meerly to avoid, as they think, the Neceſſity of parting with their darling Luſts, and the keeping that ſtrict Guard upon their Converſations, without which they muſt be loſt to all Eternity.

How cold, alas! is thoſe Mens Love for Me? How feeble their Devotion, who, upon ſuch frivolous Pretences, can diſpenſe with this ſo neceſſary Duty, ſo glorious Privilege, of Communicating at my Table? How happy, how eaſie to himſelf, how acceptable, how dear to God is that Man, whoſe Conduct is ſo ſtrictly virtuous, whoſe Conſcience ſo void of ſtain and reproach, that he could every Day moſt cheerfully, moſt ſafely partake of this heavenly Feaſt, were the Opportunities of doing ſo equal to his Diſpoſition, and might his Zeal eſcape the Cenſure of needleſs Oſtentation? For a Man is not preſently to be condemned, who does not ſeek or embrace every poſſible Occaſion of Communicating. There may be ſome very allowable, and others even commendable, Reaſons for abſenting. If out of deep Humility, and awful Reverence, or as a voluntary Puniſhment inflicted upon a Man's ſelf for ſome grievous Relapſe, he impoſe this Penance or dread to come: The Reſpect paid to the Ordinance, or the holy Indignation conceived againſt himſelf, may be better accepted and more becoming, than Receiving in ſuch Circumſtances. But this muſt not be ſo far indulged, that long Diſuſe ſhould produce Indifference and Diſregard for the Sacrament; For, if once the Soul degenerate into Neglect and Spiritual Sloth all poſſible Endeavours muſt be uſed to awaken it. Not doubting but that God will be ever preſent with the Aſſiſtances of his Grace, and ſeeond thy Care with Succeſs proportionable to

thy Vigour and Diligence, and the Sincerity of thy good Intentions.

But One thing muſt always be obſerved, That, when the Hindrances to Communicating are real and important and neceſſary, not frivolous Excuſes induſtriouſly ſought, or readily laid hold on to cover Impiety and Negligence, the Perſon ſo detained is preſent in Wiſh and Inclination, though not in actual Attendance. And then the Benefit of the Sacrament, and all the Saving Effects of it are as fully imparted to him, as his Appearance in the Congregation, and the Elements themſelves, could have enſured them. For 'tis a great Miſtake to imagine, that good Men receive not the Advantages of Chriſt's Body and Blood, except juſt then, when they receive the outward and viſible Signs of them: Every Day, Every Hour furniſhes Opportunities of Communicating ſpiritually, and a Man thus compoſed can never be ſurpriſed, never find any difficulty to comply with any Occaſion of doing it publickly. For an innocent Life, and a devout Mind are a conſtant Preparation. But when the uſual Seaſons return, and eſpecially the Solemn Feſtivals, wherein the great and glorious Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion are commemorated, then ſuch a one will think it his Duty to joyn with the Publick Aſſemblies in this ſublimeſt Inſtance of Piety and Thankſgiving; He will approach with a Heart full of Affection and Reverence; and eſteem this Homage due, not only to himſelf for the Comforts and Advantages he may expect from it, but more eſpecially to Me, for the Honour and Tribute of Praiſe, by which my Name and Mercies ought to be thus magnified among Men. And this is a Fruit which can only redound to me by open and viſible Acts of Worſhip. Whereas the Other of private Improvement and myſtical Communion with Chriſt, is attained in ſecret, and conſtantly follows upon every religious Meditation concerning

cerning my Incarnation, and Sufferings, or any other of the myſterious Works, by which the Redemption of Mankind was compleated, and the pious Affections of Chriſtians are cheriſhed and inflamed.

They, who reſerve themſelves for the Feaſts of the Church only, and take no care to put their Souls in a due Poſture for Receiving, except only when ſuch Solemnities call them to it, are ſeldom or never prepared as they ought to be. He is the ſafe, the happy Man, who makes it his frequent Practice, and conſtantly offers up himſelf a Sacrifice to his God. In the Act of Communicating keep Rule and Order, and let not thy Haſte or Impatience, the Length of thy private Devotions, or any other Singularity of thy own Fancy, give Diſturbance to the common Uſages and Ceremonies of the Congregation whereof thou art a Member. For take this along with thee, That, even in this Part of Worſhip, where Zeal and Devotion are moſt acceptable Ingredients, yet theſe very Qualifications, when indulged out of Seaſon and Meaſure, loſe all their Value; and are not half ſo pleaſing in the ſight of God, as unaffected Modeſty, and an humble decent Compliance with the eſtabliſhed Orders, and Cuſtoms of the Church, and the Convenience of others; who ought not to be diſturbed, or incommoded for the fantaſtical or peculiar Ways of any private Perſon whatſoever.

Chap. XI.

The Benefit of Chriſt's Body, and Word.

Diſciple.] O Sweeteſt deareſt Jeſus, Who can expreſs the Charms, the Tranſports, of that Soul, which feaſts with thee at thy Table? That Table,

Table, where no common Food is placed, but the Divine Entertainment of thy own Body and Blood. An Entertainment delicious, above all that Man can expreſs or imagine! What Satisfaction ſhould we take to come into thy Tabernacle, and fall low on our Knees before thy Foot-ſtool, to open wide our Hearts for the Delights of thy Houſe, and, with *Mary Magdalen*, to waſh thy holy Feet with Tears of Love! But where, alas! is this Devotion to be found? where are thoſe Eyes overflowing with pious Sorrow? Or, if that Sorrow be ſwallowed up in Joy, yet ought we not even thus to approach thee with dry Eyes; but Tears of Joy ſhould trickle down apace, when we conſider our mighty Privilege, and the Happineſs of being admitted to thy bleſſed Preſence, and made Partakers of the Bliſs of Angels. For, as they really behold thy Face in Glory, ſo am I ſure to ſee, and to receive thee, in the myſtick Elements, though covered there under a different Form, and ſhrouded in a Veil of Bread and Wine.

I adore thy Goodneſs, which thus condeſcends to the Infirmities of Humane Nature, and in much Compaſſion is pleaſed under theſe ſenſible Repreſentations to hide that glorious Majeſty, whoſe native Luſtre is too piercing bright, for Me or any created Being to behold in its full Strength. But, tho' my Eyes ſee thee not as thou art, yet here, I know, I have thee moſt effectually, and do therefore moſt humbly adore that Divinity on Earth, which Angels proſtrate themſelves before in Heaven. I do it through a Glaſs, and I gaze with the Eyes of Faith; They are permitted to do *it Face to Face, and to know even as they are known.* And, though this Glaſs be dark and dim, yet it is ſuch as I ought to be content with, ſince Mortality admits of nothing better; nor can I attain any higher Perfection, till the Day of everlaſting Life dawn, and the thick Shadows of Figures are ſcattered

1 Cor. xiii.

tered by its Brightneſs. When that which is perfect ſhall come, then will all Uſe for Sacraments be ſuperſeded, and for ever ceaſe; For Theſe are Remedies and Expedients, accommodated to a State of Frailty and Imperfection, ſuch as the Bleſſed above have no occaſion for. They are in endleſs and unſpotted Perfection, and ever rejoycing in the Beams of thy glorious Preſence; They ſee thee as thou art, and are transformed into the Excellencies they ſee; They taſte the Word made Fleſh, not in the Symbols of his Humane Nature, but in the Native Charms of his Divine; as he was the Word of God from all Eternity, and ſhall continue ſo to be for ever. 1 *John* iii.

When theſe Ideas ſo full of Wonder employ my Thoughts, I feel a generous Diſdain, not only of worldly Comforts, but am provoked to diſeſteem even thoſe ſpiritual and better Conſolations, which thy Grace at preſent diffuſes through my Soul: And all beſides ſeems poor and deſpicable, ſo long as I am debarred the Sight of my Love and Lord: Thou knoweſt the Secrets of my Heart, and wilt bear Teſtimony to the Sincerity of thoſe Profeſſions I make, when I declare, that nothing leſs than God, whom I moſt earneſtly long for ever to contemplate, can ſatisfie and fill the impatient Deſires of my enlarged Soul. But this I know, is a Bleſſing, not to be obtained by mortal Man, and therefore I will ſet my ſelf with Patience to wait the Time appointed for it. Thus did thy Saints of old, who now partake of the Joys and Kingdom of their Lord. Their Faith was vigorous, and their Perſeverance unſhaken, their Thirſtings eager, but their Patience exemplary and humble, till that Coming of their Lord, which they thought long, at leaſt releaſed, and exalted them. My Hope, my Faith are now the ſame, which Theirs were then; and, I truſt, my Joy and Crown, ſhall, by thy Grace and Mercy, be one Day the ſame too. Till that Day come,

come, I will tread in their Steps, and ſupport my ſelf by the contemplation of their bright Examples. Thy Holy Scriptures ſhall be my Comfort; In Them, as in a Glaſs, I will view and adorn my Soul: And above all, thy bleſſed Body and Blood ſhall be my Spiritual Suſtenance. Here will I ſeek for Strength againſt Infirmities, here apply Balm to my Wounds, and Phyſick to my Diſeaſes, and hither fly for Refuge in all my Fears, and Dangers, and Temptations.

Two things are plainly neceſſary to the preſervation of Life, without which no Miſery could be ſo inſupportable, as that of living here. The diſmal Confinement of this Priſon of Fleſh can only be endured by the Help of Food and Light. Thy Mercy hath not left us deſtitute of this Proviſion; but kindly given thy holy Body for my Refreſhment and Suſtenance, and thy holy Word for *a Lantern unto my Feet, and a Light unto my Paths.* To theſe I owe, not my Comfort alone, but even my Life it ſelf: For the Word of God is the Light of the Soul, and the Sacrament of his Death is the Bread of Life. Theſe are the two Tables of the Chriſtian, reſembling thoſe of the Jewiſh, Church heretofore, where the Divine Treaſures are expoſed and preſerved. The One, like that of the Shew-bread, furniſhed moſt richly with the Symbols of thy precious Body; the Other, like the Repoſitory of the Law, containing holy Doctrines, preſcribing true and ſaving Faith, and leading us within the Veil to the moſt holy Place.

Pſalm cxix.

Hebr. ix.

All Honour, and Praiſe, and Thankſgiving be to the bleſſed Jeſus, Light of eternal uncreated Light, for the Table of his heavenly Doctrine, ſpread and adorned by the Miniſtry of his inſpired Servants, the Prophets, Apoſtles, and other holy Writers, taught by Himſelf, that they might teach us. All Glory and Thanks be to the great Creator and merciful Redeemer

deemer of Mankind, for his extenſive tender Love, in preparing a plenteous Feaſt for all the World: Not like that Paſchal Lamb of old, a Type and Shadow only, but the very Subſtance of that Shadow, the Accompliſhment of that Type; even *Chriſt our Paſſover ſacrificed for us*, and exhibited to us. This Bread ſuſtains, this Cup cheers and rejoyces, the Hearts of the Faithful; it fills them with the overflowing Delights of Paradiſe, is a Pledge and Antepaſt of Heaven, and, allowing for the difference of Conditions, admits us into Partnerſhip with Angels themſelves; The Joy of both is the ſame, though both cannot receive it in equal Proportions.

How high and honourable is that Function, to which God hath permitted, nay enjoyned, to Miniſter in theſe holy Things; to handle and deliver this bleſſed Bread, and give each Servant his Portion of Life by and with it; to implore with wonderful Efficacy the divine Bleſſing, and exalt natural and common Things to Purpoſes and Effects infinitely exceeding all the Powers of Nature? How clean ſhould thoſe Hands, how pure thoſe Lips, how chaſte and holy that Body be, which ſo frequently, ſo familiarly, converſe with, and are united to the Author and Perfection of all Purity? Sure nothing of corrupt Communication, nothing indecent, nothing idle or trifling, nothing but what may tend to edifying, ought to come out of that Mouth, which ſo often bleſſes, and conſecrates, and takes into it, the Sacrament of his dying Redeemer. How ſhould thoſe Eyes be turned away from Vanity, how immovably fixed upon heavenly Objects, which ſee their Lord's myſtical Body, and invite his peculiar Preſence, ſo frequently brought upon the Altar, by virtue of their being lifted up to the Throne of Grace, in Benedictions, and Prayers, of his own inſtituting.

To Men of this Profeſſion under the Law, no doubt that Precept was in a more eſpecial manner intended,

Lev. xix. *Be ye Holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy.* But ſure the Sanctity and exemplary Lives of Prieſts under the Goſpel ought as much to excel thoſe of the Sons of *Aaron*, as our Miniſtration exceeds theirs in Glory. And therefore; Grant thy Grace, O bleſſed God, to all who are admitted to this holy Office; and Thou, who alone workeſt great Marvels, exert thy almighty Power, in enabling every ſuch Perſon to ſerve at thine Altar, with clean Hands and a pure Heart, with a becoming Zeal, and moving Devotion; ſuch as may not only ſute their own Character, but be a Pattern, and powerful Incitement, to the Piety of others. And if we cannot, (as indeed we are ſtill but Men, and in many things offend all) if we cannot ſtand before thee in pure unblemiſhed Innocence, or come not up to all thoſe eminent Degrees of Perfection, which we might and ought: yet let at leaſt our deep and godly Sorrow expiate our Offences; and our Reſolutions of entire Reformation, and more conſpicuous Piety and Devotion for the time to come, Our unfeigned Humility, and Charity unconfined, and Labours indefatigable, make ſuch Reparation, as thou wilt pleaſe to accept, for the Miſcarriages occaſioned by the Fraud and Malice of the Devil, or by our own carnal Will and Frailneſs.

Chap. XII.

Of Preparation to the Communion.

Chriſt.] I Love Holineſs, and I give what I love. A pure Heart is the thing I delight in, and This is the Place of my Reſt. Furniſh me thy largeſt Room, and I will come and eat

Luke xxii.

eat the Paſſover at thy Houſe with my Diſciples. Purge out thy old Leaven, and dreſs up every Corner of thy Heart; Sweep it clean from the World, and all its corrupt Affections, throw out the Lumber and the Filth of thy Sins; if thou deſire, that I ſhould come and make my abode with thee. Sit as a Sparrow alone upon the Houſe top, and mourn in thy Cloſet for all the Tranſgreſſions wherein thou haſt exceeded; ſo will I be with thee, and comfort thee, in the bitterneſs of thy Soul. This careful Preparation will be the natural Conſequence of thy Sincerity and Reſpect for Me; For every Lover provides his beſt Apartment to entertain his Friend, and beſt Beloved; and, by his diligence to receive ſo deſired a Gueſt, expreſſes the Truth and Greatneſs of his Affection.

But know withal, when thou haſt done thy utmoſt, that even whole Years employed in Preparation cannot effect what in ſtrict Juſtice is my due. That thou art admitted to my Table, and received kindly there, is owing, after all, not to thy own Deſert, but to My Grace and Mercy, which accepts thy weak Endeavours, and paſſes by thy Sin and Unworthineſs. If Beggars with their Nakedneſs and Sores, have leave to ſit and feaſt with Princes, their Duty is, with Humility and Thankfulneſs, to acknowledge the mighty Favour. Do then thy part, and do it in the beſt manner thou canſt; do it diligently and heartily; Come not as by compulſion, but come willingly and gladly; come not for Faſhion's ſake, but come with Reverence and godly Fear, and fervent Zeal. When thy Saviour condeſcends to come to thee, refuſe him not, nor turn thy Back and flee from his Table. I have invited, I have commanded thee, to come; Let not thy Infirmities diſcourage thee, for they are all perfectly known to Me, and I will conſider and allow for them, and what is wanting in Nature ſhall be ſupplied by Grace.

When

When thou feeleſt thy Heart burn with Love and Devotion, return thy Thanks to God for kindling theſe holy Fires. I did it, not becauſe thou art worthy of ſuch Grace, but becauſe I had Compaſſion on thy Weakneſs and thy Wants. When thou findeſt thy ſelf cold and inſenſible in religious Duties, double thy Diligence and thy Prayers, lament thy Deadneſs, and continue knocking; For if thou perſevere, and wilt take no denial, thou ſhalt not ask in vain, but be fed, at leaſt, with the Crums that fall from thy Maſter's Table. Thou ſtand'ſt in need of Me, but I have none of Thee. It is for Thy benefit, not my own, that I vouchſafe to meet thee at this Sacrament. Thou comeſt hither to be filled, and ſtrengthened, and ſanctified, to return better than thou cameſt, to receive increaſe of Grace, to be One with me, and dwell in me; and thoſe who come ſincerely diſpoſed to receive Me, and amend their Lives, I will in no wiſe ſend empty away. Do not then neglect thoſe precious Opportunities; Do not abſent, or come careleſly; but make me room in thy Heart, and let it be a clean and fit Reception for ſo pure a Gueſt, and He, whom thou loveſt, will go home with thee to thy Houſe.

Matth. vii. and xv.

But then obſerve, that there is the ſame Neceſſity of Care and Watchfulneſs *after* this Sacrament, as of Prayer and Preparation *before* it. For a conſtant virtuous Life and ſtrict Guard over a Man's ſelf is the beſt and moſt effectual Preparation to every Sacrament, and the ſureſt Means of obtaining more and greater Degrees of Grace. A Man, who preſently returns to the World, and gives himſelf a looſe to the Liberties and Affections, the Buſineſs and the Pleaſures of it, undoes what he had taken Pains to do before; and defeats the good Effects of his moſt ſolemn Preparations. Be not fond of variety of Company and Diverſions; nor laviſh and unwary in thy Di-

Diſcourſe; but rather chuſe to retire into thy Chamber and converſe much with God in Solitude and Silence. When thou haſt Him, thou haſt a Treaſure, which nothing can take from thee. I am worthy of thee all, and I expect thee all; divide not thy ſelf between Me and the World, but let Me be thy Love, thy Joy, thy Deſire; *ſo ſhall thy Life be hid with Chriſt in God*; and, though thou canſt not live in thy Self, yet thou ſhalt live in Me, full of Tranquility and Peace, and above the diſorderly Paſſions and ruffling Cares of ſenſual and earthly-minded Men. Coloſſ. iii.

CHAP. XIII.

The Soul's Deſire of Union with Chriſt.

Diſciple.] I Hear thy gracious Words, my deareſt Lord, and eaſily believe the inexpreſſible Happineſs of Them, whoſe Souls thy heavenly Preſence fills. But how, Oh! how ſhall I attain that Bliſs? How ſhall I ſeek and find my God alone? How open my Heart to entertain Thee, ſo as to exclude all other intruding Gueſts? Oh! that no Man, no Creature might from henceforth find place in my Affections and Deſires, ſo as to interrupt my Converſation with thee! When ſhall I break looſe from Company and Care, and Enjoy and Talk with Thee alone, in Language free and kind, as that of deareſt Friends; and ſoft and tender, ſweet and charming, as the unreſerved Retirements and endearing Whiſpers of the moſt paſſionate Lovers? This is my earneſt Wiſh, This my conſtant Prayer, that my Heart may be knit entirely to Thee, and weaned from every earthly and ſenſual Delight, learn to taſte heavenly and eternal

nal Joys by frequent Returns to thy holy Communion. Ah when, my God, ſhall I be wholly thine, regardleſs of my ſelf, ſwallowed up quite in a bliſsful indeſſoluble Union with Chriſt? *Thou, Lord, in Me, and I in Thee*, and thus may we continue One for ever.

John xvii.

Thou verily art my Beloved, my Choſen, the Chiefeſt among ten Thouſand, the Friend of my Boſom, with whom I deſire to dwell all the Days of my Life. Thou art my Peace, and only Comfort; Without thee I find nothing but Labour and Sorrow, Vexation and Torment, and Miſery inſupportable. Thou art a *God, that hideſt thy Self*, Not dealing thy Bleſſings promiſcuouſly, but, with wiſe and juſt diſtinction, ſatisfying the Humble and Meek with the Pleaſures of thy Word, while thou concealeſt thy Counſel from the Wicked, and leaveſt them to Groan, and Howl in the Anguiſh, and Horrour of their guilty Souls. O! how great is thy Bounty! how ſweet thy Mercy! who refreſheſt thy hungry Servants with the delicious Bread, which came down from Heaven, that thy Faithful might eat thereof and not dye. Surely there is no Nation under Heaven, which hath God ſo near to them, as the Lord our God is unto Us, in all that we call upon him for. For he *healeth the broken in Heart, he hath reſpect unto the Lowly*, he *lifteth the Simple out of the Duſt, and raiſeth the Needy from the Dunghil, to ſet them with Princes*, to equal them with Angels; nay to give them his Fleſh for the ſatisfying their Hunger, and, when they are thirſty, the Wine of his Blood to drink.

John vi. *Deut. iv.*

Pſal. cxlvii, cxxxviii, cxiii.

What Society of Men can boaſt of Privileges worthy to be named with thoſe of the Chriſtian Church? What Creature under Heaven, whoſe Excellence and Happineſs is comparable to the pious and devout Soul, where God takes up his Reſidence, and ſuſtains the Heart

Heart that entertains him, with his own glorious Body? O Grace unſpeakable! O Condeſcenſion moſt amazing! O Love unmeaſurable! Lord, what is Man, that thou ſhould'ſt thus viſit him? or what can he render unto his God for theſe ineſtimable Benefits? Alas! I have no return to make, but a poor worthleſs Heart; and This is yet a farther Inſtance of thy Goodneſs, that thou expecteſt no other Teſtimony of Gratitude, but my Self and my ſincere Affection. Thus haſt thou made our Duty our greateſt Happineſs: For then ſhall my Soul be glad, and all that is within me leap for Joy, when my Heart is perfectly united to my God. Then ſhalt thou ſay, *If thou wilt be mine, I will live and dwell with thee for ever.* And I with humble Joy reply, *Diſdain not, Lord, this mean and homely Dwelling, for I moſt willingly, moſt thankfully, embrace the Offer. Lo I am thine entirely from this moment, and, above all things, wiſh and pray, That the Intimacy and Friendſhip thus contracted may continue firm and inviolable, that nothing may abate our Love, and the Delights of it, or ever part our Perſons any more.*

Chap. XIV.

An Act of Exciting Devotion by the Example of Others.

Diſciple.] O *How plentiful is thy Goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee!* Pſal. xxxi. When I reflect with what ardent Piety, with what affectionate Devotion, with what an eager Zeal, thy Saints approach this heavenly Supper; Shame and Confuſion overwhelms me quite, conſcious of my own, but lukewarm at the beſt, and too too often perfectly ſtupid and frozen, Heart;

with what Indifference and Coldneſs I approach thy Myſteries, and how unaffected with thy Mercies, how unprofitable under the gracious Diſpenſation, I return. What a Reproach is it, that my Heart ſhould not be all enflamed with the Exceſs of thy Love; that I ſhould have no ſenſe, no apprehenſion, of my greateſt Happineſs; no Hungrings and Thirſtings after it? But, notwithſtanding the moving Examples of many excellent Perſons, ſhould ſtill continue void of all Impreſſion, ſo ſcandalouſly unlike thoſe pious Souls; whoſe Zeal overflowed in Tears of Joy; whoſe Hearts, as well as Mouths, drinks greedily at this Fountain of Life, whoſe Appetites were ſo ſtrong as never to be ſatisfied, till they had filled themſelves with thy bleſſed Body, and fed liberally, and with a ſort of holy Luxury indulged at this celeſtial Banquet.

A Faith ſo eager, ſo exalted, plainly confeſs'd, they felt thy gracious Preſence; and that their Lord was known to Them, as heretofore to the Diſciples at *Emmaus*, in *breaking of Bread*; The burning of their Hearts within them was an irrefragable Teſtimony of it. But how far ſhort, alas! do I come of Their Zeal and Devotion? Look mercifully, Lord, upon my Infirmities, and, if an equal Portion of thy Grace be too great a Favour for thy poor unworthy Servant, yet grant me ſuch a degree, ſuch a ſenſe of thy Goodneſs and wonderful Love, that I may be as ſincerely, though not ſo ſtrongly, affected with it. If Raptures and Extaſies of Delight may not be my Portion, yet deny me not Improvement; but let my Faith be ſtrengthened, my Hope confirmed, my Love ſo warmed by this Sacrament, that, after having once taſted this heavenly Manna, I may never more deſire the *Onions and Garlick of Egypt*, nor in my Heart turn back from ſo good a God.

Luke xxiv.

I know thy Mercy and thy Power, to which nothing is impoſſible, nothing hard. I know thou canſt, and

and I hope in thy good time thou wilt, visit me with more abundant Measures of thy Grace, and fulfil all my desire. This Confidence I cherish, because my very Desires are from thee: And it is some Comfort to me, that, though I am sensible of my Weaknesses and my Wants, yet I long and pant after Supplies and Strength; that I am not content with my Misery, but labour, and pray against, my Defects, and would fain be better. And thus I will continue to do, till thou remove and vanquish my Frailties, inspire a bright and ardent Zeal, and make me a happy Partaker, first of the virtuous Disposition of thy devouter Saints, and then of their Reward and Happiness.

Chap. XV.

Grace is the Reward of Humility and Self-denial.

Christ.] Since thy Wishes are so commendable, and thy Desires of Grace sincere, I will instruct thee, how thou shalt obtain it. Know then this Blessing is suspended upon certain Conditions. It must be sought instantly, asked fervently, waited for patiently, received thankfully, preserved by Humility, improved with Diligence, and the Time and Measures of receiving it submitted entirely to the Wisdom and Goodness of the heavenly Giver. If thou feel few or no Sparks of it in thy Mind, this is a proper Subject, to exercise thy Meekness and godly Sorrow, but not to provoke Despair or immoderate Concern. For God frequently gives that in an Instant, and with a liberal Hand, which Men had long expected without Success. He gratifies their Constancy and Patience, their Importunity and Perseverance in Prayer, with Benefits, which excellent Reasons moved him

to deny to their firſt Requeſts, for the Petitioners mighty advantage.

Should Mens earlieſt Expectations be anſwered, or prevented, the mighty Bleſſing would be too exquiſite for frail Nature to bear. And therefore holy Raptures, and exalted Virtue, are wiſely made the ſlow Fruit of long Time, and much Patience. But, when thy Deſires are not fulfilled, when thou receiveſt no Increaſe, or when the Grace thou once enjoyed'ſt is inſenſibly withdrawn; charge not God fooliſhly, but lament thy Sins, as the Occaſion of this Unhappineſs. A ſmall Provocation may ſometimes be a Bar to great Advantages. Though nothing indeed ought to be reputed ſmall, which intercepts and hinders ſo valuable Bleſſings. But be it little or great, let it be thy care to vanquiſh and remove this Obſtruction, and then thy Heart's deſire ſhall be performed.

When once corrupt Self-love is ſubdued, and thy Soul entirely ſubmitted and reſigned to God, Peace and Satisfaction will flow in apace upon thy Mind. For nothing can be grievous or unpalatable, to one, who hath renounced all Intereſts of his own, and hath no Inclinations or Deſires left, but only, that he may be made an Inſtrument of God's Glory, and have all the Counſel of the Divine Will, which is always beſt, fulfilled in and upon him. This Man ſo weaned from private Reſpects and all created Comforts, is in a proper Poſture for receiving Grace, and taſting the ſpiritual Delights of Contemplation and Devotion. The Veſſel muſt be empty, before Grace can be poured in; and when it is perfectly ſo, God delights to fill it up to the Brim. The more a Man is dead to the World and himſelf, the more heavenly-minded, the more mortified and humble: the ſwifter are the Motions of heavenly Grace towards him, the more liberal are its Diſtributions, the more ſenſible, and delightful, and wonderful, its Comforts and Effects upon his Heart.

Then

Then ſhall he ſee the loving Kindneſs of the Lord, then ſhall he feel his Soul and all its Powers enlarged, and even ſtand amazed at the happy Change. Lo! thus ſhall the Man be bleſſed that feareth, and ſeeketh the Lord with all his Strength, and ſuffereth not his Heart to wander after Vanity. This Man ſhall receive the bleſſed Sacrament with wondrous Efficacy, He ſhall as truly be united to Chriſt in his Soul, as the Bread and Wine, which repreſent him, are incorporated with the Subſtance of his Body. And that which inclines God to be ſo particularly Propitious and Bountiful to ſuch a one, is that reſigned Temper of Mind, which propoſes the Advancement of God's Honour and Glory, rather than his own Profit; and comes, more out of a Senſe of Duty and juſt Homage to his Saviour, than with a Proſpect of Comfort and Satisfaction to himſelf.

Chap. XVI.

A Prayer for Relief in our Wants and Spiritual Diſtreſſes.

Diſciple.] HEar me, O ſweeteſt, kindeſt Jeſus, whom I now approach, with moſt hearty deſires of receiving thee into my Soul. But how can I expect, that thou wilt not deſpiſe a Place ſo unfit to entertain thy pure, thy glorious Majeſty? Thou knoweſt, Lord, my Weakneſſes and my Wants; how great my Sufferings, and how black my Sins; how I am oppreſſed and afflicted, tempted and overpower'd; diſordered with Paſſion, and ſtained with Pollution. To Thee I fly for Succour againſt my Infirmities, for Phyſick againſt my Diſeaſes, for Support under my Calamities and Diſtreſſes. I cannot diſſemble my Con-

dition, I need not publiſh it; when addreſſing to One who knows all things, to whom my very inward Parts are naked and open; To Him, who alone can give effectual Relief to my Sorrows, and ſupply my crying Neceſſities. Thy Wiſdom knows what Succours are moſt ſeaſonable and proper for my Circumſtances, and how very ſlender and low my Stock of Virtue is.

Behold, I ſtand before thee, a helpleſs Creature; Rev. iii. *Miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and weak*, imploring thy Grace, or at leaſt ſome Fragments of it, to this hungry ſtarving Beggar. O let me not be famiſhed, but revive this ſinking Wretch with ſome Crumbs of heavenly Suſtenance. Let me not periſh with Cold, but warm me with thy Love; Let me not fall into the Pit, but enlighten my blind Eyes with the Shine of thy gracious Preſence. Give me a ſettled Diſreliſh of worldly Pleaſures, and make all here below inſipid and bitter to me. Reconcile me to Croſſes and Afflictions by Submiſſion and ſteady Patience; and leſſen every thing in this World, whether Enjoyment or Suffering, by teaching me to deſpiſe and forget it. Raiſe my ſtupid Heart up to Heaven, and ſettle my Affections there, that They may no longer wildly rove after the trifling Objects of Fleſh and Senſe. Let me henceforth taſte Delight in nothing but Thee, nor Iſai. lv. *ſpend my Money and Labour for that which is not Bread*; for thou alone art *Meat indeed, and Drink indeed*, my Love, and Joy, my Delight and exceeding great Reward, my perfect and ſole Good.

O that, now I am approaching the Throne of Grace, thou would'ſt command thy divine Fire to deſcend from Heaven into my Soul! O that my Sins and corrupt Diſpoſitions might be the Burnt-offering conſumed by it! that it might flame, and burn, and melt me down, purge away all my Droſs, and by the violence of its powerful Heat refine, and change, and incor-

incorporate me with thy ſelf. Let me not, I beſeech thee, be ſent empty away, let me not return hungry and thirſty, from ſo ſplendid an Entertainment; but work in me mightily, and deal bountifully with thy Servant, as thou uſeſt to do unto thoſe that love thy Name. I hope to find a wondrous Alteration, and cannot think it ſtrange, if I feel my benummed Heart all ſublimated, when I come to that Fire which ever burns without conſuming; Or if I find an entire Separation of all my worldly and groſs Affections, when heated throughly with that Love, whoſe Excellence it is, to purifie the Heart by the activity, and to enlighten blind Underſtandings, by the brightneſs, of its Flame.

Chap. XVII.

An Act of Praiſe.

Diſciple.] Look down, O Lord, with Favour and good Acceptance upon thy poor unworthy, but ſincere Servant, now proſtrating himſelf before thine Altar, with a moſt devout Zeal, and all the paſſionate and tender Reſentment, of which my Heart is capable; Wiſhing ſtill, that theſe good Affections were greater and worthy of thee, and that I might meet and embrace my Lord, with all that Perfection of Holineſs and eager Joy, by which thy beſt and deareſt Saints recommended their Prayers and Praiſes, and ſo eminently ſignalized themſelves in the Celebration of this bleſſed Sacrament. O God! my Love and Life, my only and eternal Bliſs, Were but my Power proportioned to my Will, None of thoſe excellent Patterns ever expreſs'd more awful Reverence, more ardent Devotion, more eager Love, more hum-

humble Gratitude, than I at this time am diſpoſed, and moſt earneſtly wiſh, to expreſs.

I know, O Lord, how far I am from being worthy to receive at thy Hand ſuch plentiful Effuſions of Grace, ſuch diſtinguiſhing Marks of thy Kindneſs, as enabled Them to be ſo pious and exemplary in all their Addreſſes to thee: but yet my Heart, and all its Affections, ſuch as they are, I dedicate to thy Service. The utmoſt a devout Mind can conceive or deſire I offer in thy Preſence with all poſſible Reſpect, with Sincerity as unfeigned, as though my Zeal were much more bright and fierce. I do it without the leaſt Reſerve, All I have and am is entirely thine; moſt freely conſecrated to thy uſe, my God and Lord, my Almighty Creatour, and moſt merciful Redeemer: Take then a full Poſſeſſion of One, upon ſo many Accounts thy own. Enter, and dwell, and reign in me, abſolute, and for ever. Behold, I open my Arms wide to embrace my Lord, and Spouſe; I deſire at this time to receive thee into my Heart, with the ſame Reverence and Humility, the ſame reſpectful Gratitude and Love, the ſame Faith and Hope, and chaſte Deſire, with which thy holy Mother received thee into her Virgin-womb; when ſhe returned that pious Anſwer to the Angel who brought the glad Tydings of thy myſterious Incarnation, *Behold the Hand-maid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy Word.*

Luke i.

And, as thy Servant, *John Baptiſt*, that greateſt among them that are born of Women, thy Meſſenger ſent to Prepare thy Way before thee, felt the powerful Influence of thy Divine Preſence, and confeſs'd it, by leaping in his Mother's Womb for Joy; As He, aſcribing nothing to himſelf, did afterwards declare himſelf the *Bridegroom's Friend, whoſe Joy was full in hearing the Bridegroom's Voice*; So do I deſire to offer my ſelf without

Luke i.

John iii.

out any Exception, or Regard to private Intereſt, and to rejoyce and live in Thee alone. May all the Zeal, and Raptures, the Extaſies and heavenly Viſions of the Saints; May all their Virtues and their Praiſes; May every Creature in Heaven and Earth; May all that I have ever prayed for, and all that pray for me, contribute to thy Glory; and may thy Name be only and ever magnified by all and each of them.

Accept, O Lord, my hearty Wiſhes and Deſires of Praiſe and Thankſgivings, as infinite as thy Majeſty, for they are Thine of right, and mayeſt thou be worthily bleſſed by them. This is, and ſhall be, my daily hourly Prayer. Nor will I content my ſelf with Wiſhing and Endeavouring this, ſingly and in my own Perſon, but do moſt ſeriouſly Invite and Conjure all the bleſſed Spirits above, all thy faithful People upon Earth, to joyn in this moſt juſt Tribute of Honour; and in full Conſort and perfect Harmony, to publiſh thy Praiſe and Glory, in all Times and Places.

Come in, ye Nations and Countries, all Kindreds and Languages of the World, and bear your Parts in Singing forth the ſweet, the ſaving, the holy Name of Jeſus. Raiſe your Devotions, as high as humane Nature can go, for you can never go far enough. And, You, devout Diſciples of this bleſſed Maſter, as oft as you receive this holy Sacrament, ſee that you reverently adore this Myſtery of Love. And then be ſure with a moſt fervent Faith and univerſal Charity, to beſeech this gracious Saviour, that the Effect of his Death may be as general as the Deſign of it; that he who Died for All, may be Glorified in the Salvation of All. And may thoſe Supplications be ſucceſsful in obtaining Mercy, for your Selves, and every Sinner, and for Me, the Chief of Sinners, in particular.

And when you return from this precious heavenly Feaſt, full of Grace and Joy, remember then to look back

back with tender Compaſſion upon your weaker Brethren; and wiſh, that every contrite and afflicted Soul may be admitted to the like Comforts, may feel the ſame wonderful Efficacy from this myſterious Table; and let not Me, the leaſt and moſt unworthy of your Brethren, who want them moſt of any, be denied a part in your Charitable Interceſſions.

Chap. XVIII.

Againſt Nice Diſputes concerning this Sacrament.

Chriſt.] IF thou would'ſt preſerve thy Faith incorrupt, and thy Devotion from diſtraction, content thy ſelf with reverencing and admiring theſe holy Myſteries, and do not indulge a buſie Curioſity, in bold and unprofitable Enquiries concerning them. For this is the way to damp a godly Zeal, and to perplex thy Mind with intricate and endleſs Doubts. Re-
Prov. xxv. 2. member, *it is the Glory of God to conceal a thing*, and his ſuper-eminent Wiſdom and Power procures it ſelf juſt Veneration, by doing more than Man is able to comprehend. I do not mean by this to exact a blind Obedience, but expect and commend the Uſe of Reaſon in the Search of divine Truths. Provided always, that it be tempered with Sobriety and Modeſty, with Teachableneſs, and a due Reſpect to what I my ſelf have revealed in my Word, and what my Church hath faithfully delivered in her Doctrines and Expoſitions upon it.

Happy is that Meekneſs and Poverty of Spirit, which induſtriouſly declines the rugged thorny Paths of Controverſie and captious Diſputes; and walks in the plain ſmooth Way of Duty, and practical Religion; which ſtudies God's Commands, and labours to under-

underſtand things of a ſize with its Capacity, without troubling it ſelf about his Doings and Decrees. Too many Inſtances there are of daring Men, who, by preſuming to ſound the deep Things of Religion, have cavilled and argued themſelves out of all Religion. Theſe Men miſtake their Buſineſs: For the thing required of a Chriſtian, is not Penetration, and Subtlety of Wit, nice Diſtinctions, or ſublime Notions, but vigorous Faith, and an honeſt holy Life: Sobriety and Temperance and Chaſtity, Juſtice and Charity, Piety and Devotion. How oft is Reaſon puzled, even in Matters relating to Creatures inferiour to thy ſelf? And will not this Reflection controul, and cure, an Expectation ſo extravagant and abſurd, as that of being able to give a clear Account of Things above thee, nay of perfectly Underſtanding thy Great, thy Infinite Creatour himſelf? Submit thy Reaſon to Revelation; and let Humility and Deference to God recommend thy Faith; and then, though thou canſt not attain *All* Knowledge, yet thou ſhalt be ſure not to want *any*, that is neceſſary or profitable for thee.

Many Men are much diſſatisfied in their Minds, with Doubts concerning the Nature of true Faith, and Difficulties which ariſe concerning my Preſence in the Sacrament. But theſe Doubts are not always ſinful, nor always from themſelves; but frequently owing to the Temptation of the Devil, and induſtriouſly ſcattered by Him, with wicked Artifice and malicious Deſign. Be not therefore too anxious upon theſe Occaſions: Trouble not thy ſelf to argue nicely, nor imploy thy Thoughts upon the Matter; nor hold thy ſelf concerned to be able to anſwer every Cavil which he puts into thy Head: But keep cloſe to Scripture, and do thy Duty, and the Enemy will ſoon retreat, when he finds thee neglect his Attempts. Think not theſe inward Diſtractions, a Sign, that thou art forſaken of God.

God. They are rather the contrary, and a Mark of Grace. God ſuffers them, to exerciſe thy Patience, to try thy Conſtancy, to promote thy Spiritual Advantage. Wert thou a Reprobate, thou would'ſt not thus be aſſaulted; For ſuch the Devil is ſure of already, and Temptations are thrown away upon them. They are the Faithful, the Sincere, the Devout Chriſtians, whom he teazes and torments; for, in ſo doing, he hopes to enlarge his Dominion, and to ſeduce thoſe who were not His before.

Proceed then in thy Chriſtian Courſe with Reſolution and Patience, and ſtill frequent the Sacrament, with ſtedfaſt Faith and humble Reverence. Whatever there thou findeſt to exceed thy Underſtanding, put it to God's Account; and leave Him to make it good, though thou canſt not conceive how it ſhould be done. He will not deceive thee; but They who rely upon their own Underſtandings, are ſure to deceive themſelves. Remember God hath ſaid, that *he walks and dwells with the Humble, and ſhews his Ways to the Meek, that he reveals himſelf to Babes*; that he opens the Eyes of the Honeſt and Sincere, but hides his Grace and Knowledge from the Proud, and Wiſe in their own Sight. Reaſon (Experience proves) may both deceive, and be deceived; for it is but humane; but Faith has God for its Foundation, and cannot err, becauſe depending upon One, who is Truth it ſelf, incapable of miſtaking, or of impoſing upon others.

'Tis therefore highly fit, and, in Matters of Religion, abſolutely neceſſary, that theſe two Principles ſhould know their Order and reſpective Stations, and each contain it ſelf within its proper Sphere. Faith, (which ſuppoſes a Revelation received and acknowledged) challenges the higheſt Place, and Reaſon ought to keep her diſtance, to ſerve and follow after, not to ſet Bounds to, or aſſume, and encroach, and uſurp over the Other. For Faith and Charity are the two Pil-

Pillars, upon which Chriſtianity ſtands; the two governing Principles of a good Man's Opinions and Actions. And Their Authority and Influence is in no one Inſtance more conſiderable, than in This of the bleſſed Sacrament. God is infinite and eternal, his Power unbounded and incomprehenſible, He *does whatſoever pleaſeth Him in Heaven and in Earth*, and who can *underſtand his Counſels, or find out all his Methods?* If the Works of God were ſuch as Humane Reaſon could penetrate with eaſe, they would loſe great part of their Glory; and we ſhould ſoon abate of our Awe and Veneration for their Author, if his Dealings were not above the Power of our Tongues to expreſs, and the utmoſt Extent of our Imaginations to conceive. *O that Men would therefore praiſe the Lord for his Goodneſs, and confeſs the Wonders that he hath done for the Children of Men! for great and marvellous are thy Works, oh Lord God Almighty! How unſearchable are thy Judgments, and thy Ways paſt finding out!* Pſalm cvii. Rev. xiv. Rom. xi.

The E N D.

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ADVERTISEMENT
TO THE
READER.

THE Publiſhers of this Edition, being deſirous to render this little Book as generally uſeful as it was poſſible; And conſidering, that the two great Occaſions of Extraordinary Devotion are, the Seaſons of Receiving the Bleſſed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and that of Sickneſs; they thought the former reaſonably well provided for, in the Fourth Book of the foregoing Tranſlation, and engaged Me to make ſome Supplementary Proviſion for the latter. This I was the rather diſpoſed to do, in regard a great part of that which follows lay by me, ſome time ſince compoſed, at the Requeſt of a Lady, (now I hope with God) who deſired my Aſſiſtance in Preparing ſome Meditations, that might be proper for her then very weak and languiſhing Condition. The manner in which they were drawn ſeemed not ill to ſute with the Temper of the Author to which they are fixed; and the Deſign of caſting them into this Form is to promote in ſome meaſure thoſe Reaſonings with a Man's own Mind, which, at all times indeed, but eſpecially in ſuch Circumſtances, would prove of excellent Advantage, if frequent Uſe did but render them more familiar.

I am far from thinking, that theſe few Sheets have any thing in them of equal Perfection, with thoſe many Pious and well-weighed Treatiſes, written by others upon this Subject. Much leſs would I have the Reader imagine, that either This or Thoſe can ſuperſede the Neceſſity and Benefit of the Prayers of the Church, and the Advice of our Spiritual Phyſicians. Theſe ought always to be conſulted in the firſt Place, before

Matters come to extremity; And a conſcientious Perſon, after all his own Care, will find Buſineß enough for them. But the Exerciſes of Piety preſcribed in ſuch Tracts will be good Helps, and fill up thoſe Intervals very well, which the Languiſhings of a Sick Bed many times allow, when it cannot be expected, that the Ordinary Guides of our Souls ſhould be ready with their Attendance. Whoſe Directions in the Meaſures of Mens Repentance, while under the afflicting Hand of God, and the proper Methods of Expreſſing their Thankfulneß when delivered from it, as well as their prudent Comforts adminiſtred to wounded and contrite Hearts, will notwithſtanding be always ſeaſonable and neceſſary.

The Devout Chriſtian, who converſes much with the Word of God, and the Offices of the Church, will find himſelf able to make large Additions to the following Devotions. In which it was much more difficult to reſtrain my Pen, than to expatiate a great deal further. But I conſidered the Condition of the Perſons they were intended for: and therefore contented my ſelf with ſuch ſhort Hints under each Head, as the Weakneß of that would bear. If what I have offered here may tend to the promoting of Piety, and the ſanctifying ſuch Diſpenſations of Providence to any one of my Chriſtian Brethren, by kindling in them a holy Zeal, and inſpiring good Purpoſes, I have my End. And this, with God's Bleſſing, I hope it will, and heartily pray that it may, in ſome Degree be capable of.

GEO. STANHOPE.

Medita-

Meditations and Prayers FOR Sick Perſons.

MEDITATION I.

Upon Sickneſs in general, the Author, Cauſes and Ends of it.

I. COme, my Soul, and let us reaſon together, concerning the Things that have befallen us. This Body, to which thou art united, flags and droops; the Vigour of it is abated, its Beauty withered and waſted; The well-knit Limbs are grown feeble, and with great difficulty ſuſtain their Weight, or obey thy Commands. They ſcarce perform thy Offices aright; And when they do, it is with Pantings and Tremblings, with Wearineſs and Faintneſs; They ſeem to groan and ſink under their Burden, and each Member, which was formerly wont to ſerve Thee, with wonderful Cheerfulneſs and Activity, now calls for Succours from abroad, and is no longer able to ſupport it ſelf. This is ſuch a Change, as ought not to be felt only, but well conſidered too; *Be not thou* therefore *like to Horſe and Mule, which have no Underſtanding*, but loſe all Impreſſions, as ſoon as the Senſe of the Stroke ceaſes: It is Thy Pſal. xxxii. 10.

Privilege and Duty both, to reflect and ruminate; to call back Things already paſt, and anticipate thoſe which are to come; and for ſuch as are actually preſent, to acquaint thy ſelf with the Cauſes and Reaſons, the Ends and Uſes of them, as well as with the Nature and Quality of the Things themſelves. All theſe are Operations proper to a Reaſoning Soul, and the preſent Occaſion calls upon thee for the Exerciſe of them all. For thou canſt not be ſick, as becomes a Man, and a Chriſtian, without enquiring, whence, and wherefore it is, that thou art ſo: The firſt and moſt neceſſary Step, both toward the Patient enduring of the Anguiſh, and the ſucceſsful Application of the Remedies, is to learn the true Original of our Diſeaſe.

II. Know therefore moſt aſſuredly, That what the Holy Ghoſt hath ſpoken concerning Affliction in general, is in an eſpecial manner true concerning This particular Branch of it, *It cometh not forth out of the Duſt, neither doth Trouble ſpring out of the Ground.* Our ſelves indeed were taken thence, and moulded into Man; But this was not the Effect of any Natural Cauſe; The God of Nature by his Almighty Power, commanded Earth and Aſhes into This beauteous and wonderful Structure of Humane Body. And He alone, who created and formed it, commands it back into its Native Duſt again. Every Diſeaſe and Decay, whether it be the Effect of Accident or Time, whether what we uſually call violent, and ſhortning our Days; or whether according to the Courſe of Nature, and the ſlower Declinings of Age, All are but ſo many Shocks, by which this fleſhly Tabernacle is ſhaken, or moulders by degrees, and by growing more ruinous and uninhabitable, gives the Soul warning to ſeek another Dwelling. And theſe are all diſpoſed by a moſt ſteady and particular Providence; and, if traced up to their firſt Original, have

Job v. 6.

a Cause as sublime, as the Body it self: Nature indeed goes on in a smooth and settled Course; and so the Hand that guides this Engine is far distant, and seldom observed; but even Nature it self is God's Instrument, though the Process and the long Chain of Causes be so intricate, and withal so familiar, and frequently alike, that the Events resulting from thence cease to be marvellous in our Eyes. A Cold, or a Surfeit; a weak Constitution, or a foul Blood; unwholsome Diet and ill Hours; Neglect of Means and Carelesness of our Health; Advice taken too late, or a Medicine improper, or out of Season; These are what we commonly charge our Indispositions and our Miscarriages upon. And thus far we may say true, but if we go no higher, we stop a great deal too soon. For it is easie to discern a Hand above, that directs and limits all these; that smites the Strong, and preserves the Tender; slays by the slightest Accidents, and recovers from the most desperate; and this in a manner most surprising, such as no Humane Art or Skill had any expectation, or can give any account, of.

III. If then thou hast convinced thy self, that the Finger of God is in all these Things; Pursue this Thought (my Soul) a little farther; and see what a fair and wide Scene of Knowledge and Heavenly Wisdom it will soon open to Thee. For what is God? Is not He that very Being infinitely Powerful, and Wise, and Just, and Good? Is it not He, who made thee, and sustains thee, the same who governs and disposes this whole World, and all the Creatures in it, after the Counsel of his own Will? He, with whom the Lives of his Servants are exceeding precious? In whose Sight the Hairs of our Head are all numbred? Without whose Permission not a Sparrow can fall to the Ground, and in whose Estimation the meanest of those that are made after his own Image, are of infinitely more value than many Sparrows?

Remember that ſuch is the Authour of thy Diſeaſe, and that ſingle Remembrance will lead thee to ſuch Conſequences, ſuch holy and ſeaſonable Reflections, as cannot, if duly attended, and carefully improved, but work in thee that frame of Mind, which beſt ſutes thy preſent Circumſtances, and muſt needs diſpoſe thee to reap large and laſting Advantages from them. For how canſt thou conſider his Power, and not dread the dire Effects of an Angry, or reſt ſecure under the Favour and Protection of a Reconciled God? Or how his Wiſdom, and not be contented with his Choices for thee? Or how his Juſtice, and not be moſt zealouſly concerned, to ſeek a Pardon for thoſe Sins, which have provoked, and made thee an Object of it? Or how his Goodneſs, and not be even thankful under thy Sufferings, ſince what is grievous to Fleſh and Blood, is yet ordained to excellent and heavenly Purpoſes, and it is out of very kindneſs that thou art thus Afflicted? Or how upon his Right of Creation, without acknowledgment of his Bounty in giving and continuing thy Being, and all the Comforts of it? Or how, laſtly, upon his Preference of Mankind above the reſt of the Creatures here below, without obſerving the peculiar Prerogative, which renders Men more valuable, That of a noble and reaſonable Soul, which the others want; without Cheriſhing the Hope of Immortality, whereunto Man only of all here below, is appointed? A Hope, which aſſures us, we ſhall not periſh, but only be changed; and in the midſt of Languiſhings and departing Struggles, can bear up under, nay can triumph over, Agonies and Death it ſelf. Here then will I fix my Thoughts, I will come before the Almighty with a Song, and make my Prayer unto the God of my Life.

HYMN.

Hymn.

GOD is the Lord, even God alone; He killeth, and he maketh alive, he woundeth, and he healeth. Deut. xxxii. 39. 1 Sam. ii. 6.

Thou, Lord, hast power of Life, and Death; Thou scourgest, and shewest Mercy; Thou leadest to the Gates of the Grave, and bringest up again. Wisd. xvi. 13. Tob. xiii. 2.

It is he that holdeth our Soul in Life, and suffereth not our Feet to slip. Psal. lxvi. 8.

And again, when we are minished and brought low, through Sickness, through any Affliction or Sorrow. cvii. 39, 40.

Though he suffer us to be evil entreated, yet helpeth he the Meek out of Misery, or maketh all his Bed in his Sickness; xli. 3.

For it is neither Herb, nor mollifying Plaister, that restoreth Men to Health, but thy Word, O Lord, which healeth all things. Wisd. xvi. 12.

My Time is alway in thy Hand; unto God the Lord belong the Issues of Life and Death. Ps. xxxi. 17. lxviii. 20.

All Creatures wait upon thee, when thou openest thy Hand they are filled with Good. civ. 27.

When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; when thou hidest thy Face, they are troubled; 28. 29.

when thou takest away their Breath, they dye, and are turned again to their Dust. 30.

I will Sing to the Lord as long as I live, I will Praise my God, while I have my Being. 33.

My Meditation of him shall be sweet; and my Joy shall be in the Lord. 34.

When thou saidst, Seek ye my Face; my Heart said unto me, Thy Face, Lord, will I seek. xxvii. 8.

O hide not thou thy Face from me, nor cast away thy Servant in Displeasure. 9.

Thou hast been my Helper, leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my Salvation. 10.

Pſal. xx. 7. *Some put their truſt in* Strength of Nature, *and* ſome in Medicines, *but I will remember the Name of the Lord our God.*

cxlvi. 2. *O put not your Truſt* (in Phyſicians, *nor*) *in any Child of Man, for there is no help in them.*

4. *But bleſſed is he that hath the God of Jacob for his Help, and whoſe Hope is in the Lord his God.*

xx. 9. *Save, Lord, and hear me, O King of Heaven, when I call upon Thee.*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, &c.
As it was in the Beginning, &c.

Prayer.

O Almighty God, the Father of the Spirits of all Fleſh, whoſe never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in Heaven and Earth: I deſire with the profoundeſt Humility and Reverence, to proſtrate both Soul and Body before thee, begging that thou would'ſt give me Grace, to behold and admire thy Doings, in all thy Diſpenſations towards my ſelf, and all Mankind. I acknowledge it thy Bounty, that I ever was at all; and adore thy Mercy and Long-ſuffering for preſerving me thus long in the Land of the Living. My many Days and Years of Health and Comfort were thy Gift; and the Recoveries from former Sickneſſes, as well as the Prevention of thoſe Dangers and Diſeaſes I never felt, are owing to thee alone. Man doth not live by Bread and Care, nor is relieved by Medicines only, but by the Word and Bleſſing, which proceedeth out of the Mouth of God. Grant me, I beſeech thee, a ſtrong and due Senſe of my entire Dependance upon Thee, and Grace to improve under, and behave my ſelf in conformity to, that Perſwaſion. That whether the Means uſed for my Eaſe and Relief ſucceed, I may aſcribe all the Glory and Thanks to thee alone; or whether thou think-eſt fit to deny them their intended Effects, I may humble my ſelf under thy mighty Hand, and remember that thou, Lord, haſt done it. Inſpire me, I beſeech thee, with that

true

true and heavenly Wisdom, which may help me to discern aright the Reasons, and enable me to answer the Ends, of this Correction, and all other thy Dealings with me. That I may hear the Rod, and who hath appointed it; and, in all Conditions, submit my self entirely to thy good Pleasure; and glorifie God in the Day of Visitation. That so this Weakness of my Body may tend to the Strengthening of my Virtues, and the Health of my Soul; through the Merits of Him who redeemed them both at the Price of his own Blood, even thy Son and our ever blessed Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Med. II.

Of the Power of God, and the Affections arising from thence, Dread of his Anger, and Trust in his Protection.

I. WHich way soever we turn our Eyes, ten thousand Objects meet us, which all Prove and Preach to us the Almighty Power of God. The glorious Fabrick of the Universe, and every thing contained therein, nay even the meanest, and, in humane Esteem, most despicable Creature, proclaims aloud the Omnipotence of its Maker. And the good Order, in which these are contained, does as much magnifie his Preserving, as their Existence does his Creating, Power. But Man needs not look abroad; Himself is ten thousand Arguments to demonstrate this to himself. The curious Structure of his Body, the Excellencies of its Divine Inhabitant, the Soul; and the marvellous amazing Union, and mutual Correspondence of both these, could be the Workmanship of nothing less than Omnipotence. This Mixture of Spirit and Matter, of Perishing and Immortal; the Saga-

Sagacity of the one to influence and govern, the Readineſs of the other to obey, and be actuated; The Sprightlineſs and Vigour; or elſe the Heavineſs and Diſorder, and reciprocal Diſabilities, which each of theſe convey to the other, are moſt certainly the Lord's doing, and ought to be marvellous in our Eyes. But, alas! how ſhould Man ſubſiſt one Moment even in the State of his Greateſt Perfection, did not this Great Artificer watch over his own Work, and conſtantly ſuſtain it; did not He check and moderate that Conflict, which the warring Elements of our Body are continually engaging in? But eſpecially, now that the Corruption of our Nature, and the Tranſgreſſion of our firſt Parent, hath let Death and Diſeaſes looſe upon us: There needs no freſh Infliction; For if God be but paſſive, and withdraw his Reſtraint, the Enemy is always ready to devour us, and we carry the Seeds of our Torment and Ruine about our own Perſons. And God hath ſo decreed, that every Man ſhall once fall by the Stroke of Death; which in our greateſt Strength, in the very Bloom and Beauty of Youth, contrary to our own Expectations, or the Fears of our tendereſt Friends, he ſometimes executes; to teach us, that our Being is wholly precarious, that we have nothing Stable here, no Title even to Life it ſelf; but are all concluded by a Sentence already paſs'd; and all our Days are in the nature of a Reprieve; The prolonging whereof is an Act of meer Mercy, as the cutting it ſhort is free from the leaſt Shadow of Injuſtice. God then cannot want Means and Opportunities for this; All Nature is His; The Malice of wicked Men, The Spight of our Foes, The miſtaken Kindneſs of our Friends, The Errours of our Phyſicians, and the Miſapplication of their Medicines, are all directed and over-ruled to this End: The Humours of our Bodies, the Temper of the Air, and every Element indeed, when he gives the word,

turn

turn Executioners; or, in Truth, if He but pleaſe to permit, the Thing will do it ſelf. He burns us up by Feavers, or drowns us in Dropſies, ſtrikes us Dead in a Moment by Apoplexies, buries us alive by Palſies, or waſts us by ſlow and imperceptible Degrees, with lingring Conſumptions. Thou ſeeſt, my Soul, how eaſily God can do theſe, by a thouſand Inſtances of Friends, and Acquaintance gone before, and by thy own yet more ſenſible Experience, in this worn and languiſhing Body of Thine. Thou feeleſt now, that no Fleſh is able to ſtand before God, and how quickly we are blaſted by the Breath of his Diſpleaſure. That to Him alone belongs Power and Strength, and to poor mortal Man, nothing but Wretchedneſs, and Weakneſs, and Vanity.

II. Surely (my Soul) had theſe Impreſſions been freſh and deep upon me heretofore, they would have checkt my wild Career in Sin; and prevented many grievous and bold Tranſgreſſions, which I have reaſon to fear might provoke the Divine Majeſty, to caſt me upon this Bed of Languiſhing. For do We provoke the Lord to Jealouſie? are we ſtronger than He? Alas! my own Condition hath taught me how vain and fool-hardy it is, not only to fight againſt God; but not to fear, and ſtand in perpetual awe of him: how fatal to play with this conſuming Fire. And I cannot but wiſh from the bottom of my Soul, that I had better conſidered this Point long ago, That he is a terrible and a mighty God; and when he enters into Controverſie with Mankind, no Fleſh can abide it. At leaſt, my Soul, let us make that good uſe of this Reflection now, to be unfeignedly Sorry for what is paſt; and more Cautious and Obſervant for the time to come. The Flower is withered indeed, and hangs its feeble Head; but it is not yet quite cut down; O let us yet humble our ſelves in his Fear, and conſider what a yet more dreadful Vengeance God hath in ſtore for hardened and unperſwadeable Wretches.

If

If the Decays and Pains of the Body alone are ſo grievous, how ſhall we bear the loſs of Body and Soul both? how ſhall we dwell with Everlaſting Burnings? If the Rod of God, theſe comparatively light Puniſhments, repreſent to us the Terrors of his angry Juſtice; Who can bear the Approach of that Diſmal Day, when he ſhall come in Thunder and Flames, to make an abſolute End of this whole World, and deliver wicked Sinners over to irrecoverable Deſtruction? An Eternity of Torments! Jeſus defend us! who can entertain even the moſt diſtant Thought of it, without Trembling and Aſtoniſhment? Fall down then, my Soul, and humble thy ſelf under the mighty Hand of God; that thou may'ſt not periſh with this frail Body; and loſe no time in making thy Peace, but work with all thy might; eſpecially now, that the Day of Life ſeems to decline, and the Night comes on wherein no Man can Work.

III. For remember, my Soul, for thy encouragement, that if thou abound in the Work of the Lord, thy Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord. 1 Cor. xv. 58. He is no leſs mighty to ſave than to deſtroy: With Him no Word is impoſſible; and, if he will, he can even yet raiſe this feeble Body, and reſtore it to perfect Health and Soundneſs. Nay he will certainly do it, if That be beſt for me; and if it be not, he will do yet more. For there will come a Day, in which this vile earthy Part ſhall be enlivened again; and if it crumble into Duſt, and ſcatter in the mean while; though it paſs through infinite different Forms, yet will He purſue this Body through all its Changes, collect its diſperſed Particles, command the little Heaps of Duſt to awake, and tranſlate it into a Glorious and a Spiritual Body; fit for a State of Incorruption, and the Inheritance of that Kingdom, where this Fleſh and Blood, which we now ſet ſo falſe, ſo extravagant a value upon, is not worthy to enter. 1 Cor. xv. I will therefore confirm my ſelf, in the Power and Promiſes of my God: and,

and, with holy *Job*; *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* For even then I will lay me down in hope of a Resurrection to Eternal Life; and commit my Body like Seed, to the Ground; not to be lost, but improved, by corrupting there. For Thou, O God, art unchangeable, and thy Promises without Repentance; and promised thou hast, that our vile Body shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious Body, according to the mighty working, whereby thou art able to subdue all things to thy self. Job xiii. 15. *Phil.* iii. 21.

EJACULATIONS.

IN thee therefore, O Lord, will I put my trust; let me never be put to Confusion, but deliver me in thy Righteousness, and save me. Psalm lxxi.

Be thou my Strong-hold, whereunto I may alway resort; thou hast promised to help me, for thou art my House of Defence, and my Castle.

Deliver me, O my God, from the Adversary's Hand, preserve me from the Hunter of Souls;

He layeth Snares, and is mighty to destroy; but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high, is mightier.

Thou, O Lord God, art the Thing that I long for; Thou hast been my Hope even from my Youth.

Through thee have I been holden up ever since I was born; Thou art he that took me out of my Mother's Womb; my Praise shall be always of thee.

O cast me not away in the Time of my Distress, forsake me not, when my Strength faileth me.

Let them be confounded and perish, that are against my Soul; let the wicked Spirits be covered with Shame and Dishonour, that seek to do me evil.

As for me, I will patiently tarry the Lord's Leisure, and will put my Trust in the Lord. Psal. xxvii. 16.

For

Job xix. 25. *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he ſhall ſtand at the Laſt Day upon the Earth;*

26. *And though after my Skin Worms deſtroy this Body, yet in my Fleſh ſhall I ſee God:*

27. *Whom I ſhall ſee for my ſelf, and mine Eyes ſhall behold, and not another.*

John xi. 25. *For he is the Reſurrection and the Life, and whoſoever believeth in him, though he dye, yet ſhall he live again.*

Glory be to the Father, &c.
As it was in the Beginning, &c.

Prayer.

O Moſt glorious Lord God, Terrible in thy Judgments, and Wonderful in all thy Dealings toward the Children of Men; Poſſeſs my Soul, I beſeech thee, with awful and becoming Apprehenſions of thy Majeſty. Give me a ſerious Senſe and Sorrow for ever having hardened my Heart from thy Fear, and provoked that Vengeance, which can conſume me in a moment. Lord, convince me whom I ought to dread, and let me never, for the gratifying any ſinful Inclination, forget any more the Lord my Maker; and incur the Diſpleaſure of Him, who is able to caſt both Body and Soul into Hell. And, as I implore thy Grace, that this Conſideration of thy Power may be an effectual Check to all my unruly Appetites; ſo, I beſeech thee, let it be my Stay and Confidence in all Dangers and Diſtreſſes. That, forſaking the broken Reeds of all worldly Succours, I may put my whole Truſt in thy Mercy; and evermore ſerving Thee in Holineſs and Pureneſs of Living, may even in Death it ſelf be more than Conqueror: Even in that Joyful Day, when all Enemies ſhall be deſtroyed; and thy Children ſhall come forth from the dark Priſons of the Grave; and ſhine like Suns in the Kingdom of Thee their Father. Grant this, thou Rock of my Soul, for thy dear Son Jeſus Chriſt's ſake. Amen.

Med.

Med. III.

Of the Justice of God: And the Penitential Sorrow resulting from it.

I. GOD is a Being infinitely perfect and good; the Supreme, the Original Good; the Author and Maker of all Things; and cannot therefore be supposed, either to hate what himself hath made, or to have given Being to any thing, with a Design to render it Miserable. His Providence and Power, which made the Subject of the two former Meditations, are in their own Nature and primitive Intention, calculated for the Benefit and Security of his Creatures; And if at any time they become the Instruments or Dispensers of Grief and Pain, This is an Effect purely accidental; an Operation so foreign, that it is even extorted from them, and wholly imputable to some other Cause. And this is the Case of Mankind; once favoured above all their Fellow-Creatures, and safe under the Shelter and Smiles of an Almighty Protector; But by their own Fault deprived of this Defence; left naked and exposed to Mischiefs and Sufferings; and not only disarmed of their surest Guard, but in perpetual Danger of being destroyed, by that very Hand, which was formerly their Friend and Defender. Oh wretched Consequences of Sin! that did not only render our first Parents and all their Posterity liable to bodily Death, and all the Diseases and Pains that lead to it; but left a fatal Averseness to all Good, and a strong Propension in us to all Evil; by indulging whereof we add our own actual Guilt, to That which our sinful Parents had derived down to us; and by Iniquities without number, by wilful, repeated, habitual, and bold Transgressions, do confirm and aggravate this Sentence of Death, and arm the Justice of God against our selves.

II.

II. Wonder not then, if thou ſee ſo many dreadful Spectacles of Affliction in the World; nor Murmur, when Thou thy ſelf art bound in the ſame Fetters, and ſore loaden with the Burden of Adverſity; But remember, that God is righteous, and Thou and theſe People are wicked, that He is Holy and Juſt, as well as Good; and though he do not willingly grieve the Children of Men, yet their Iniquities put a ſort of Violence upon him, which he cannot reſiſt. They quite weary him out, and render it impoſſible, (that is, inconſiſtent with the other Attributes and the Perfections of his Nature) to let ſuch Men go always unpuniſhed. Nay even in thoſe infinitely more dreadful Torments of another World, his Perfections are concerned to vindicate themſelves; for though Theſe be Terrible, above what we are able to expreſs or conceive, yet are they Juſt. And at the ſame time that we may be apt to queſtion, whether ſo great Severity be conſiſtent with the Character of our Judge, we prove the Wiſdom of our Lawgiver; and, that even Eternal Pains were neceſſary, ſince even all This will not contain us in our Duty, nor effectually reſtrain us from Sinning.

III. And This, my Soul, is thy Caſe. Theſe everlaſting Plagues are the deſerved Wages of thy Wickedneſs. For do but deſcend into thy Self, (as it becomes thee to do, now more eſpecially) and there take an exact Survey of thy Miſeries and Frailties; thy raging Paſſions and ungoverned Appetites; Ask thy Self, what Abuſes and Miſemployments of Health thou haſt been guilty of; Whether thou have not neglected and forgot God and Heaven too much, and been too full for Care and Fondneſs for this preſent World; Whether thou have not omitted his Worſhip and Sacraments, diſregarded his Word, or whether theſe have not been frequented formally and coldly. Examine the Heavineſs of thy Affections, the Wandrings

drings and Negligence of thy Mind in publick and private Devotions. [*Here it may be convenient to instance in any other Particulars against our Duty to God.*] See again the Violations of Justice and Charity to thy Neighbour, whether thou hast faithfully discharged the Offices of the several Capacities and Relations God hath placed thee in; [*A Husband or Wife, a Master or Mistress, a Son or Daughter, a Magistrate, a Subject, a Parent, a Brother or Sister, and the like.*] If thou have not been guilty of gross and palpable Injustice in thy Dealings, yet hast thou done wrong to no Man's Soul, by ill Advice, or ill Example? Nor to the Bodies of any, by Malice or Contempt, by ill Treatment, severe Usage, want of Compassion and Care for their Infirmities? What Reputations hast thou injured by Scandal and Censure; by false and uncharitable Judgments; by busie medling with Matters that concern thee not; by officiously spreading, or too hastily believing ill Reports; by encouraging, repeating, and being pleased with, Detracting or severe Reflections; or if by none of these, yet at least by neglecting to reprove, or to discountenance a slanderous Tongue, and to deliver the Innocent from its secret Stabs? [*Here again be particular in any other Sins you have been guilty of against your Neighbour.*] Turn thy Eyes inward once more; and behold the Breaches of that Duty thou owest to thy Self; the Intemperance, and Irregularity of thy Desires; the Murmurings and Discontents; the Infirmities indulged; the Passions unsubdued; the Negligence in thy greatest Concerns; the Love of unlawful, and the Abuse of lawful, Diversions and Delights. These are Things so incident to our State, that no Man's Conscience can speak Peace to him in them all; And happy art thou in those, where thine condemns thee not. But know withal, that God is greater than thy Heart, and knoweth all things; He keeps exact account of 1 *John* iii. 20.

thy lurking Corruptions, and ſecret Faults; the unobſerved, or the long-ſince forgotten, Miſdemeanors of thy Life. The black Catalogue whereof, could they be ſet before thee, would give a diſmal Proſpect, full of Horror, and Confuſion, and intolerable Amazement. So that thou muſt of neceſſity acknowledge thy ſelf a Maſs of Filth and Miſery; a Wretch, that, if God ſhould enter into Judgment with thee, haſt reaſon to expect nothing better than Indignation and Fury; to be ſet up as a Mark of his Vengeance, and by ſome ſwift exemplary Deſtruction ſwept violently away into the hotteſt Flames of Hell.

IV. Thus much I am ſadly ſenſible of, and do ſtand condemned out of my own Mouth. And thus far the Circumſtances of all Mankind are the ſame, that if God ſhould be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, the very beſt of us all could not abide it. But, bleſſed be God, though Matters are deplorable, they are not quite deſperate, for there is Mercy with Him, and his Juſtice is ſatisfied. The Price and Purchaſe of our Souls is paid; our forfeit Lives are ranſomed and redeemed; Our Ranſom in Value exceeds the whole World; even his own beloved and only begotten Son; who ſpared not his own Life, but willingly poured out his Soul to the Death; and is thereby become a Sacrifice and Atonement for the Sins of wretched Mortals. He hath publiſhed glad Tydings of Reconciliation and Repentance, of Pardon and Peace. He came to ſave Sinners, even the Chief of Sinners; our God willeth not the Death of any; provided they believe and ſincerely obey him: not according to the Shekel of the Sanctuary, which requires unſinning Perfection; but after the Standard of the New Covenant, which allows for Humane Frailties; accepts Sorrow for the paſt, Amendment for the Time to come; a fervent Love of God, and honeſt Endeavours to ſerve him. This is a Saying worthy

Pſ. cxxx. 3, 4.

thy to be accepted indeed; This is the Comfort and Confidence of poor returning Sinners; And while I can see by Faith the Penalty of Eternal Damnation released, by Virtue of the Blood of this Lamb of God, slain to take away the Sins of the World; I will submit with Patience to the Temporal Punishments inflicted by my provoked God; and thankfully accept the Sicknesses and Afflictions of this present Life, as so many Warnings and Calls to Repentance.

V. And sure (my Soul) we shall take care to make this good use of them; For these are the Discipline of the Lord; and if after all that is come upon me for my evil Deeds, and for my great Trespass, seeing that thou, my God, hast punished me less than my Iniquities deserve; if I should again break thy Commandments, thou would'st certainly be angry, till thou hadst utterly consumed me; and torment me so much the more, for neglecting so great Salvation. I take therefore this Chastisement with all possible Submission; and do with unfeigned Sorrow confess my manifold Offences: I implore thy Mercy, who art justly displeased with me; and since in the midst of Life we are in Death, I cry earnestly to Thee for Succour; and beg that howsoever thou think'st fit to dispose of this corruptible Body; thou wouldst look graciously upon me in thy dear Son, and not deliver my poor Soul into the bitter Pains of Eternal Death; but pity and save me for Christ Jesus his sake. *Amen.* *Ezra* ix. 13.

Here may be repeated the xxxviii *and* li Psalms.
Then the Confession in the Communion-Service,
Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, &c.
Or else the three Prayers at the end of the Commination,
O Lord, we beseech thee, &c.
O most mighty God, &c.
Turn thou me, O good Lord, &c.
After either of which say as follows:

Prayer.

Visitation of the Sick.

O Most merciful God, who according to the Multitude of thy Mercies, dost ſo put away the Sins of thoſe who truly repent, that thou remembreſt them no more; Grant me, I beſeech thee, true Repentance, and thy holy Spirit; and then open thine Eye of Mercy upon my languiſhing Condition, and give me the Comfort of Pardon and Forgiveneſs. Renew in me, moſt loving Father, whatſoever hath been decayed by the Fraud and Malice of the Devil, or by my own carnal Will and Frailneſs. Preſerve and continue me in the Unity of thy Church; guard me by thy Power from all the Aſſaults of the Tempter, and ſuffer him not to take Advantage of my Weakneſs. Conſider, I beſeech thee my Contrition, accept my Tears, hear my own and others Prayers on my behalf, and aſſwage my Pains, as ſhall ſeem to Thee moſt expedient for me. In thy Mercy, O Lord, I put my full Truſt, in thy Mercy alone, and in the Merits and Sufferings of my crucified Saviour; Impute not, O Lord, unto me my former Sins, but ſtrengthen me with thy Bleſſed Spirit; and whenever thou art pleaſed to take me hence, take me unto thy Favour, through the Merits of thy dearly beloved Son, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Med. IV.

Of the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God.

I. WEre there no other Conſideration to compoſe the Mind, but that alone of our Sufferings being Juſt, ſhould in Reaſon perſwade Meekneſs, and Patience, and Contentedneſs under them. For as the Prophet urges very well; Wherefore doth a mortal Man complain, even a Man for the

Lam. iii.

the Punishment of his Sin? And the Thief upon the Cross, notwithstanding all the Hardenings of his former profligate Life, yet pacified himself under his Pains, and reproved his reviling Companion, with this Reflection, That they were under that Condemnation justly, and received but the due Reward of their evil Deeds. But we have yet abundantly more to quiet our repining Thoughts, and silence all Complaints; when the sharpness of an Affliction, or the Sufferings of a Sick Bed would provoke us to Impatience. Our Sins have been many and great enough to make God our Enemy; and do cry but too loud for the utmost Rigours of his Vengeance; yet are not these Adversities the Wounds and Bruises of an Enemy, but the Chastisements of a Father; One that smites us indeed, but it is in Righteousness and Friendship; and only with a Design to reprove and reform us. Observe what Heavenly Comforts the Apostle hath left behind, and how God himself hath explained the Nature and Intent of his own Dispensations. *My Son, despise not thou the Chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For, whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth. If ye endure Chastening, God dealeth with you, as with Sons, for what Son is he, whom the Father chasteneth not? Furthermore, we have had Fathers of our Flesh which corrected us, and we gave them Reverence; shall we not much rather be in Subjection to the Father of Spirits and live? For they verily for a few Days chastened us after their own Pleasure, but He for our Profit, that we might be Partakers of his Holiness. Now no Chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness, unto them that are exercised thereby.* *Luke* xxiii. 41. *Hebr.* xii.

II. What now can more illuſtrate the Wiſdom of Providence, than the converting our bittereſt Calamities into Occaſions of our Virtue and Happineſs? And which of all our Calamities is more likely to contribute to our Reformation, than thoſe of Sickneſs and Pain? For Theſe, by touching our own Perſons are moſt ſenſible, and grievous to be born; and by puniſhing the Body, for the ſake and ſervice of which, moſt if not all our Wickedneſſes are committed, they meet with the very Cauſe, and go to the Root of the Diſeaſe, and ſo are beſt fitted to perfect the Cure. Our Phyſician of Souls is both skilful and kind; he will not give us over out of a cruel Indulgence to our own Eaſe. Our Father anſwers his Character, and gives ſeaſonable Correction to prevent our utter Undoing. But in all this there is the Prudence of the Phyſician mixt with the Tenderneſs of the Parent. The One would not preſcribe the bitter Cup, unleſs he knew it neceſſary, and beſt for us; and if our Circumſtances call for Correction it is with Gentleneſs and Reluctancy, with Pain and Yearning of Bowels, that the Other ſcourges.

III. Do thou therefore, O my Soul, conſider who chooſes for thee, and learn to reſign thy ſelf to his Diſpoſals; for they are the Appointments of One who is wiſer than Thou, and who loves thee better than the tendereſt Mother could. Do thou likewiſe conſider, why he chooſes thus; and learn to improve under the ſeeming harſhneſs of ſuch Diſpenſations. Take gladly the wholeſome Phyſick, and ſecure a good Operation to thy ſelf; Have no Deſires or Wiſhes of thy own, but, with a Conſtant Reſerve to the good Pleaſure of God, Think and be aſſured that what he does is beſt; Beſt in it ſelf, and beſt for thee too, if thy own Fault obſtruct it not. Alas! we know not what to pray for as we ought; and ſhould therefore beg nothing poſitively, but that God would do what he ſees moſt expedient. Ask therefore, my Soul, that he would make thee

thee an Instrument of his own Glory; that he would support thee in these Tryals, and not suffer thee to be tempted above that thou art able, that he would command all things to work together for thy Good; and for the rest, take thy Saviour for thy Pattern, and as oft as thou prayest, that the Cup may pass from thee, besure forget not to add, from the very Bottom of thy Soul, *Nevertheless*, O Father, not My Will, but Thine be done.

IV. And, to render the Cup thou art now drinking as little unpalatable as may be, forget nor also to sustain thy self with the Comforts even of thy weakest Condition; and seriously to observe how Gracious the Lord is; how he hath not only spared when thou hast deserved Punishment, but in the very midst of his Wrath hath thought upon Mercy. If thy Pains be not perpetual, thank him for thy Intervals of Ease and Refreshment: If they be not acute and extreme, thank him for the Abatement and Moderation of them. If thou canst recruit thy feeble Spirits with Sleep, thank him for closing up thy Eyes, in gentle reviving Slumbers; If he hold thy Eyes waking, thank him for the Opportunities of Meditating and Praying to him in the Night-season. Yea, thank him especially for continuing to thee thy Understanding and thy Senses; and that he hath given thee the Power and the Grace to make a good and holy Use of these; that the length of thy Sickness hath been so much a larger Opportunity of Preparing for that Important Change, which, not this languishing Body of thine only, but also all those thou leavest behind in full Health, and Beauty, and Vigour, must shortly undergo. If thou endurest much; consider This is a good Method of Weaning thy Affections from the World, and making thee Thirst and Pant more earnestly after the lasting Joys of a better Place. If the tedious lingring Distemper assault, and almost weary out thy Patience, think how much rather This

is to be choſen, than the raging Phrenſies of a Feaver, or the ſudden Stroke of an Apoplexy. Reflect upon the Condition of thoſe Wretches, who are ſnatched out of the World, it may be in an act of damning Sin; but however in an Inſtant; without ſo much as the Power, or the Leiſure, to ſeek Pardon or Peace, to commit their Souls to God, or ſo much as once implore his Mercy at the laſt Gaſp. Oh! what would they have given! how much more would they gladly have endured, to purchaſe this long Warning, theſe ſlow and ſolemn Approaches of Death, the happy Advantages thou now enjoyeſt, of trimming thy Lamp, and putting thy Soul in readineſs to meet the Bridegroom at his coming! For though we ought indeed to expect him every Hour, even in our moſt confirmed Health; yet well is it for that Servant, who receives expreſs notice of his Maſter's approach, and takes care ſo to provide for it, as in zealous Prayers and eager Wiſhes to go out to meet him; and having on the Wedding-Garment, waits only for his laſt Call to enter with him to the Marriage.

EJACULATIONS.

Pſal. xliii. 5, 6. *WHy art thou ſo heavy; O my Soul, and why art thou ſo diſquieted within me? Still put thy Truſt in God, for I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my Countenance, and my God.*

xviii. 18. *The Lord hath chaſtened and corrected me, but he hath not given me over unto Deſtruction.*

cxix. 75. *I know, O Lord, that thy Judgments are right, and that Thou of very Faithfulneſs haſt cauſed me to be troubled.*

Lam. iii. 22. *It is of the Lord's Mercies, that I am not long ago conſumed, becauſe his Compaſſions fail not.*

24. *The Lord is my Portion, ſaith my Soul, therefore will I hope in him.*

It

It is good for a Man that he ſhould conſtantly hope, and quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord; 26.
For the Lord will not caſt off for ever. 31.
But though he cauſe Grief, yet will he have Compaſſion according to the Multitude of his Mercies. 32.
Yea like as a Father pitieth his own Children, even ſo is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him. Pſalm ciii. 13.
In the Multitude of the Sorrows which I have in my Heart, thy Comforts have refreſhed my Soul. xciv. 19.
For I know, That with Thee there is Mercy, and with my God is plenteous Redemption. cxxx. 7.
O remember not my old Sins, but have Mercy upon me, and that ſoon, for I am come to great Miſery. lxxix. 8.
Heal my Soul, which hath ſinned againſt thee, and then let the Lord do what ſeemeth him good. xli. 4. 1 Sam. iii. 18.

Glory be to the Father, &c.
As it was in the Beginning, &c.

Prayer.

Hear me Almighty and moſt merciful God and Saviour, extend thy accuſtomed Goodneſs to me thy poor Servant, now caſt upon this Bed of Languiſhing, and grieved with Sickneſs. Sanctifie, I beſeech thee, this thy Fatherly Correction to me, and grant that I may receive it with all the Patience and Submiſſion of a Dutiful Child. I deſire to acknowledge and adore thy Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs in every Diſpenſation of Providence toward me; and only beg, that thou wouldſt keep me ſafe under all, and then uſe what Methods thou pleaſeſt of bringing me to thy ſelf. Manifeſt thy Strength in my Weakneſs, make even my feebleſt Condition an Inſtrument of thy Glory; and the more my outward Man decayeth, ſtrengthen me, I beſeech thee, ſo much the more continually with thy Grace and holy Spirit in the inner Man. Let the Senſe of my Weakneſs add Strength to my Faith, and Seriouſneſs to my Repentance. That if it be thy good Pleaſure to reſtore me to my former Health, I may lead the Reſidue of

my

my Life in thy Fear and to thy Glory; or elſe grant me ſo to take thy Viſitation, that after this painful Life ended, I may dwell with Thee in Life everlaſting. For This, O Lord, is the chief, the moſt earneſt Deſire of my Soul, that whether I live, I may live unto the Lord; or whether I dye, I may dye unto the Lord; ſo that Living and Dying I may be thine, through Jeſus Chriſt, my dear and only Saviour. Amen.

Med. V.

Upon Recovery from Sickneſs.

I. IF Dangers and Diſtreſſes awaken our Conſideration, the Deliverances from them ought not to paſs unobſerved. The Judgments of God extort Complaints from us; and ſhall his Mercies be received in ſilence? When he afflicts and wounds, we ſeek him early; and ſhall we forget him, when he refreſhes and heals us? That ſure were moſt unworthy, moſt reproachful. The rather ſo; becauſe we are able to give our ſelves a very plain and rational Account, how it comes to paſs that we receive Evil at the Hand of God; But the Good he vouchſafes us, furniſhes juſt Matter, no leſs of Wonder, than of Thankfulneſs. Death is the Puniſhment of Sin; The Diſeaſes and Decays of our Bodies are ſo many Degrees of and Advances toward that Death: And our Conſciences can find no difficulty in juſtifying theſe painful Diſpenſations. For none of us can deſcend into his own Breaſt, without diſcovering infinite perſonal Offences, which might provoke God to take this forfeit Life, and to cut us off in the midſt of our Days. But when he forbears to do ſo, when he checks his Wrath, and ſuſpends the Execution of that fatal Sentence gone out

out against us, We can discern no reason for This in our selves; but must resolve it all into the sole, the undeserved, Goodness of our compassionate and long-suffering Lord.

And such, my Soul, is now thy Case. Thou wert hastening apace to the Regions of the Dead, and in fear that thou should'st be deprived of the Residue of thy Years. But when thou wait almost *cut off with pining Sickness, and thine Eyes even failed with looking upward*; when thou *reckoned'st each Night and Morning*, that there would be *an End of thee* upon Earth; then did the Lord stand by thee and *save thee*, even because *he had a favour unto thee.* Isai. xxxviii. 12, 13. Psal. xviii. 19.

II. Now though this be the Condition common to all Mankind, that we contribute no part to the Efficient or Meritorious Cause of such Goodness; yet in the Final one we may and must bear a very considerable part. We could not give the Blessing to our selves: We could not deserve that Almighty God should give it us: But it will lye upon us to take care that such Grace be not bestowed in vain. In one respect indeed, and strictly speaking, neither This, nor any Other of the Dispensations of Providence can possibly be in vain. For some Effect they will of necessity have, even with regard to Us. But if they do not answer the good Purposes for which they were designed; better were it for Us, that we had never received them at all. The Lengthening out our Days, if it do not amend our Manners, is but the ministring fresh and larger Opportunities of adding yet more to our Sins here, and our Torments hereafter. And happier had it been to have been swept away with a swift Destruction, than to be delivered from our Fears, and live such a Life afterwards, as is certain to render us more miserable in the End. For every Mercy, every Escape, must be accounted for, and Those which

which are entertained unthankfully, will at length prove Curſes inſtead of Bleſſings to us. It will therefore become thee, my Soul, very ſeriouſly to conſider, wherein true Thankfulneſs conſiſts, and what are the Inſtances, by which it muſt be expreſs'd.

III. When Men do any ſignal Acts of Kindneſs to each other, the Receiver eſteems himſelf obliged to pay them back again, in ſome Service or Benefit as good. This is what Men cannot be excuſed from, provided fit Opportunities offer, and their Circumſtances enable them to do it. But when the Power of doing thus is wanting, we are ſenſible, that ſo much as falls ſhort in procuring a Friend's real Advantage, ought to be made up in all becoming Teſtimonies of Reſpect; In ſuch a Readineſs of Mind, as plainly ſhews that the Party does not however want the Will and hearty Deſire of returning ſuch Favours in kind and to the full.

Now the ſame Rule of Equity muſt needs hold toward our Great Benefactor in Heaven. He is indeed ſo great, that his All-ſufficiency can neither need nor receive any Addition: and We are ſo very Poor and Impotent, that it were the Extremity of Vanity and Madneſs to imagine our ſelves capable of adding to him. The utmoſt We can do is ſo to demean our ſelves, that He and all the World may plainly perceive us duly ſenſible of his Bounty. Now this can only be demonſtrated by our conſtant and zealous Care to Pleaſe and Honour him; by taking delight in the Obedience he hath enjoyned us, and teſtifying by our Practice that we eſteem the Service of ſo liberal a Maſter our moſt reaſonable Duty, and perfect Freedom. Altho' therefore our Lips ought to ſet forth the Praiſes of the Lord, and his Kindneſs ſhould ever be in our Mouths; Yet are thoſe Praiſes never ſet forth effectually, yet is that Kindneſs never acknowledged as it ought, except our Lives and every Action publiſh it,

it. The Professions of Gratitude are of no consideration in any case, farther than they express the inward Sentiments of the Heart: That Heart cannot be truly grateful, which does not labour and study by all proper Means to approve it self to the Person, whose Debtor it is; And how this is to be done to Almighty God, his own Word hath informed us; by declaring, that the Man who truly *honours him* will *order his Conversation aright*; that They who *love him* will give Testimony of their Affection, by *keeping his Commandments*; that *the Goodness and Forbearance of God* does (in its natural and designed Tendency both) *lead to Repentance*; and even *constrains Men to live no longer to themselves*, but *to Him who hath done so great things for them.* Psalm l. 23. John xiv. 15. Rom. ii. 4. 2 Cor. v. 15.

IV. These are Reflections so self-evident, so very obvious and natural to every Man, that seldom are any remarkable Calamities undergone, or Deliverances obtained, without exciting them in our Minds. Few Wretches are so hardened in Wickedness, few so abandoned and lost to all Sense of God and Goodness, but in the Seasons of Sickness and Danger they see their past Follies with Displeasure, and discern the Reasonableness of Forsaking them. But This is the General Unhappiness, This the Great Fault of most Men, that this Remorse quickly wears off, and their good Intentions cool again. The Smart of the Rod ceases, and the Success of the Correction is lost with it: The Health of the Body grows more confirmed, and the Conscience hardens in proportion to the Constitution. And thus the Man returns to his old Vanities and Vices with the same Unconcernedness as before.

But, O my Soul, let it not be thus with Me. No! Let me look back with great Seriousness upon the Vows I made when I was in Trouble; and consider,

that

that These were not to be transient and occasional Resolutions; that they were intended for lasting Obligations, and cannot be sincerely discharged, unless they influence the Remainder of that Life so graciously restored to me. I ought to look upon my self as One raised from the Dead; and favoured with Life a second time, that from henceforth I might employ and use the Gift to the Honour of the Giver, who hath thus, as it were, created me afresh. He saw it better upon my Request to continue me longer in this State of Tryal, and I ought to give the more earnest heed, that every Day added to my past Years may prove a higher Advance in Piety and Virtue; that none of my holy Purposes languish or dye, as too many have formerly done; that this late Approach to the Grave may perpetually warn me of my Mortality; and that, whenever Death and Judgment shall actually overtake me, (as overtake me they most certainly will) I may not be found less provided to meet my Lord, than this last Summons left me.

For can I reflect upon my late Weakness, and harbour an Imagination so vain, as that this Body, in its greatest Vigour, may promise it self an everlasting Continuance? Can I observe this Youth of mine renewed as the Eagle's, and attribute it to any other Cause, than the Almighty Power and Infinite Goodness of Him, who wounds and heals, who kills and makes alive, after the Counsel of his own Will? Can I acknowledge my present Recovery owing entirely to that Power and Goodness, and not discover the indispensable Engagements, which lye upon me to make some suitable Return? And what Return is possible, what so proper, so acceptable, as that of a thankful Heart; a diligent Improvement of this Mercy; a Life in every part of it entirely dedicated to Him, who hath strengthened his Title now yet more, and made it upon so many accounts his own?

V.

V. I will therefore be frequently acting over again those Solemn Exercises of Repentance performed in the Bitterness of my Soul; and by the Repetition shew that the good Thoughts I entertained continue to be the calm and settled Sense of my more composed Mind. I will strictly examine, what Faults committed, what Duties neglected or but slightly performed, what Abuses, or what Failures in a right Improvement, of Health heretofore, might probably have provoked God to cast me upon the Bed of Sickness, and reduce me to such Extremity of Suffering. I will thank the Lord for giving me warning by this Affliction, but especially for touching and softning my Heart, and inspiring me with godly Sorrow, and holy Purposes; And to my own Endeavours I will add my most fervent Prayers, that the Continuance of his Grace may, out of this painful Chastisement, produce the peaceable and blessed Fruits of Righteousness and faithful Perseverance. To this end I will not fail, frequently to renew my good Resolutions; to cherish and keep up in my Soul all heavenly Dispositions, by constant private Prayer and serious Reflection; by attending duly upon the Publick Worship; by reading, and hearing, and conscientiously applying God's holy Word to my present Circumstances and Necessities, by letting slip none of the precious Opportunities for strengthening my Faith and other Christian Virtues in the Sacrament of my dear Redeemer's Body and Blood. I will take heed to all my Ways, be upon my guard against all Temptations and Occasions of Sinning, moderate in my most lawful Pleasures and Enjoyments, and diligent in all the Duties, which the several Relations, wherein I stand, and the State of Life to which I am appointed by Providence require of me. I *will set a Watch before my Mouth, and keep the Door of my Lips, that I offend not in my Tongue.* I will take heed, that I hurt not any

Psalm cxli. 3. xxxix. 1.

any Man by Thought, Word, or Deed; but will extend my Charity, as I am able, to all Mankind. To the poor diſtreſſed Members of my bleſſed Saviour, by ſuch Succours as Their Condition ſtands in need of, and Mine qualifies me to give; To Others by my good Advice, and ſeaſonable Inſtruction; To All by my Prayers and good Wiſhes, and the powerful Motive of a pious Example: And even to my Enemies, by Meekneſs and Forgiveneſs, even as God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath had Compaſſion on Me. I will make it my Buſineſs to become every Day more in love with Religion; and to make all with whom I converſe ſo; that I may in ſome meaſure give a Check to the Abominations of this degenerate Age in which I live, and adorn the Doctrine of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, or at leaſt ſave my ſelf from this untoward Generation. In a word, I will be ſure that the Senſe of God's Mercies, (of this Laſt in particular) may never depart out of my Mind, but live, and grow, and bring forth Fruit, and influence me powerfully to the very laſt Hour of my Life.

VI. Nor think, my Soul, that any Reſolutions can be too ſtrict, any Endeavours too much, upon this Occaſion. For, after *all that is come upon me for my evil Deeds, and for my great Treſpaſs, ſeeing that my God hath puniſhed me leſs than my Iniquities deſerve, and hath given me ſuch a Deliverance as This;* Ezra ix. 13. *Should I again break his Commandments?* Verſe 14. *Would he not then be angry with me till he had conſumed me, ſo that there ſhould be no eſcaping? O Lord, my God, Thou art righteous, for I remain yet eſcaped*; Verſe 15. but let not, I beſeech thee, this Mercy, by being forgotten or abuſed, turn to my utter and eternal Condemnation. For that this muſt be the ſad conſequence of ſuch Ingratitude at laſt, not only thy Word hath told me, but I can plainly gather it from my own Reaſon and Experience. I feel what Indig-

Indignation the Unkindness of Persons whom I have particularly obliged kindles in my Breast; I find that no sort of Resentments are more uneasie, no Provocation harder to be born, than that which arises from the Injuries and Affronts of those unworthy People, who presume upon my Friendship to use me ill. And can I suppose, that the just and jealous God will not call Them to a severe Account, who turn his Grace into Wantonness, and, when they live by Miracles of Bounty and Long-suffering, live so as to dishonour Him, and reproach the Patience that spared them? The more signal and particular his Goodness hath been, the heavier and more insupportable, no doubt, will be that *Wrath, which hardned and impenitent* Wretches *treasure up to themselves against the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.* So that our blessed Lord's Admonition to the impotent Man is in effect the Voice of Reason and every Man's own Conscience. Each Affliction, each Escape calling out loudly to the Receiver, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.* Rom. ii. 5. John v. 14.

And how indeed can it be expected, that infinitely worse should not come, when neither Severity will drive, nor Compassion and Kindness lead to amendment; when neither Correcting nor Sparing can do any good? The Circumstances of those Men are dangerous, whose Distemper only is strong: but Theirs must needs be desperate and mortal, whose very Remedies feed and inflame their Disease. If Pruning and Manuring be both in vain, the next Sentence upon the barren Fig-tree is, *Cut it down, why cumbreth it the Ground?* The Ax is already laid to the Root, and if it be lifted up to give the fatal Stroke, the End of *every Tree which bringeth not forth good Fruit*, we are expressly told shall be, *to be burnt with unquenchable Fire.* Luke xiii. Matth. iii.

VII. These Things and sundry Others, which will be apt upon such Occasions to offer themselves, if applied well and warmly to my Conscience, will have a very great and happy force, in forming my Disposition, and regulating my Conduct for the Time to come. The Recollection of God's abundant Mercies will enflame my Breast with holy Gratitude and fervent Love; such as would keep me ever passionately desirous to pay the just Tribute of my best Service in return, and cheerfully to run the way of his Commandments. The Remembrance of his Judgments will possess me with an awful Fear of displeasing him, and convince me, by my own Experience, that no Flesh can stand before him, when he is angry. My late Languishings and feeble Condition will be a seasonable and lively Admonition what this frail mortal Nature is; These will Teach me to dye daily to the World, as a Person who hath here no continuing City, but ought to seek One to come: A Person who must not, from even the most confirmed Health, entertain any such fond Prospects and vain Confidences of long Life, as may tempt me to presume Death and Judgment at a great distance, and my self secure of any Surprise from them: Much rather ought I to expect them every Moment; and both from the daily Spectacles of Mortality in my Neighbours, and the sensible Decays, or sudden Changes which happen to my self, quicken my Preparation to meet that Lord, who hath *compared himself to a Thief in the Night*, and foretold us, that he *will come in such an Hour as we think not*. Thus shall I, by a true Christian Prudence, extract Spiritual Advantage out of Temporal Evils, discern the Goodness and Wisdom of Providence even in the most afflicting Dispensations, convert the Pains and Diseases of a vile perishing Body, into Instruments of Strength and Health to my Immortal Soul; and have a happy

Psal. lxxvi.

Heb. xii.

Matth. xxiv. 43, 44.

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occasion of acknowledging with *David*, that *It is good for me to have been in Trouble*, since by that *I have learnt* more diligently to practise, more stedfastly to persevere in, *thy Statutes*. Psal. cxix. 71.

Hymn.

Praise the Lord, O my Soul; and all that is within me Praise his holy Name. Psal. ciii. 1.

Praise the Lord, O my Soul; and forget not all his Benefits. 2.

Who can express the noble Acts of the Lord; or shew forth all his Praise? cvi. 2.

Which forgiveth all thy Sins: and healeth all thine Infirmities. ciii. 3.

Which saveth thy Life from Destruction: and crowneth thee with Mercy and Loving-kindness. 4.

Which satisfieth thy Mouth with good things: making thee young and lusty as an Eagle. 5.

For his Arrows stuck fast in me; and his Hand pressed me sore. xxxviii. 2.

There was no Health in my Flesh because of his Displeasure: neither was there any Rest in my Bones, by reason of my Sin: 3.

My Soul abhorred all manner of Meat: and I was even hard at Death's Door; cvii. 18.

Then cried I unto thee, O Lord; and got me to my Lord right humbly; xxx. 8.

I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of mine Age; as for thy Years they endure throughout all Generations: cii. 24.

But what profit is there in My Blood; when I go down to the Pit? xxx. 9.

Hear my Prayer then, O Lord, and with thine Ears consider my Calling: hold not thy Peace at my Tears. xxxix. 13.

15. *O ſpare me a little, that I may recover my Strength: before I go hence, and be no more ſeen.*

cvii. 19. *So when I cried unto the Lord in my Trouble; he delivered me out of my Diſtreſs.*

20. *He ſent his Word and healed me: and I was ſaved from my Deſtruction.*

lxxi. 18. *O! what great Troubles and Adverſities haſt thou ſhewed me, and yet didſt thou turn and quicken me: Yea and broughteſt me from the deep of the Earth again.*

28. *Therefore will I praiſe thee and thy Faithfulneſs,*

l. 14. *O God: I will offer unto my God Thankſgiving, and pay my Vows unto the moſt Higheſt.*

Iſa. xxxviii. 18. *For the Grave cannot praiſe thee, Death cannot celebrate thee; They that go down to the Pit cannot declare thy Truth.*

19. *But the Living, the Living he ſhall praiſe thee, as I do this Day; the Father to the Children ſhall make known the Goodneſs of the Lord.*

Pſal. ix. 10. *And they that know thy Name, will put their truſt in Thee; for thou, Lord, haſt never failed them that ſeek thee.*

cix. 29. *As for me I will give great Thanks unto the Lord with my Mouth: and Praiſe him among the Multitude.*

lxvi. 14. *O come hither and hearken all ye that fear God; and I will tell you what he hath done for my Soul.*

lxxviii. 15. xxxiv. 4. *I was in miſery and like unto him that is at the point to dye: but He delivered me out of all my fear.*

xciv. 17. *If the Lord had not helped me: it had not failed, but my Soul had been put to ſilence.*

18. *But when I ſaid, My Foot hath ſlipped: thy Mercy, O Lord, held me up.*

Thou

Thou haſt turned my Heavineſs into Joy: thou haſt put off my Sackcloth, and girded me with Gladneſs. xxx. 11.

The Lord is my Strength and my Shield, my Heart hath truſted in him, and I am delivered: therefore my Heart danceth for joy, and in my Song will I praiſe him. xxviii. 8.

O how plentiful is thy Goodneſs which thou haſt laid up for them that love thee; and that thou haſt prepared for them that put their truſt in thee, even before the Sons of Men. xxxi. 21.

O ye that love the Lord, ſee that ye hate the thing which is evil; the Lord preſerveth the Souls of the Faithful, he delivereth them from the Hand of the Wicked One. xcvii. 10.

His Mercy and Truth ſhall follow me all the Days of my Life; and I will dwell in the Houſe of the Lord for ever. xxiii. 6.

I will keep the Ways of the Lord: and will not forſake my God as the Wicked doth. xviii. 21.

For I have an Eye unto all his Laws; and will not caſt out his Commandments from me. 22.

Praiſed be the Lord, who hath not caſt out my Prayer; nor turned his Mercy from me. lxvi. 18.

Yea, bleſſed be the Lord God, even the God of Iſrael, which only doth wondrous things: lxxii. 18.

And bleſſed be the Name of his Majeſty for ever: and let all the Earth be filled with his Majeſty. Amen, Amen. 19.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghoſt.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever ſhall be: World without end. *Amen.*

After this Hymn, the Reader may enlarge his Meditations to the ſame purpoſe, by repeating the xxx, lxxi, xxvii, cxvi, cxviii Pſalms,

Prayer.

O Moſt mighty God and merciful Father, Wonderful in thy Doings, and Gracious in all thy Diſpenſations toward the Children of Men; I thy unworthy Servant proſtrate my ſelf before thee, with all the fervent Affections of a grateful Breaſt, acknowledging it thy Goodneſs, that I am not long ago conſumed. Thou, Lord, haſt chaſtened and corrected me, but thou haſt not given me over unto Death. *Bleſſed therefore be that Divine Wiſdom, which ſaw this late Affliction ſeaſonable, and would not ſuffer me to periſh in my Folly, for want of ſuch neceſſary Warning. Bleſſed be that tender Compaſſion, which in the midſt of Wrath remembred Mercy, which made all my Bed in my Sickneſs, which paſſed by my Impatience, and many Infirmities; and inclined a willing Ear to the wandring and diſcompoſed Supplications, of a poor feeble Wretch, when he cried unto thee in his extreme Anguiſh and Diſtreſs. Bleſſed be the powerful Influences of that Grace, which diſpoſed my Heart to Conſideration and Repentance. But, above all, Bleſſed for ever be that Power and Goodneſs, which, by ſparing me when I had deſerved to be utterly cut off, hath given me Opportunity to make good thoſe Holy Reſolutions, which thy Grace inſpired, when I was in trouble. Lord, let this Goodneſs of thine, and my own ſerious Purpoſes of Amendment, never ſlip out of my Mind; but preſerve in me a conſtant tender Senſe of the indiſpenſable Obligations I lye under to better Obedience. Make me every Day more and more zealous in promoting thy Glory, and the Good of my Brethren: As a Perſon ſaved from Deſtruction, for this very End, that the Remainder of my Life ſhould be employed in the Service of my gracious Deliverer: In this Senſe, O my God, I humbly offer and preſent unto thee this Soul and Body, reſcued from Hell and the Grave; Beſeeching thee to keep them thine for ever. O let not the Return of my Health produce a Relapſe into my former Sins; but become an Inſtrument of thy greater Honour, of my own ſtricter and more ſtedfaſt Virtue here and*

and my more exquiſite Happineſs hereafter. O! that the Talents of Time and Ability to do Good, which have been heretofore ſo wretchedly neglected, may (now they are afreſh committed to my Truſt) be for the time to come ſo faithfully improved, that the ſhining Graces of an exemplary Converſation may hold ſome proportion with the Bleſſings I have been ſo particularly favoured withal. Let Theſe excite, not Me only, but Others alſo, by my Example, to love thee more fervently, to ſerve thee more cheerfully, to truſt in thee more aſſuredly. In Thee, O Lord, who ſheweſt us thy Goodneſs ſo plenteouſly, *and* daily poureſt thy Benefits upon us: *In Thee, who* never faileſt or forſakeſt them that ſeek thee: *In Thee, whoſe* Mercies are ſweet, *whoſe* Loving-kindneſs is better than Life it ſelf, *whoſe* Service is perfect Freedom, *and* in keeping whoſe Commandments there is exceeding great Reward. *Pſ.* lxviii. 19. ix. 10. lxiii. 4. xix. 11.

To this End, Sanctifie, I beſeech thee, all the Methods of thy Providence to the Salvation of my immortal Soul; And eſpecially, let not thy abuſed Mercies ever riſe up in Judgment againſt me. O! may my paſt Sufferings work in me great Humility and godly Fear; that from Them I may confirm my ſelf in Faith, and Patience, and an entire Reſignation to thy Will and wiſer Choices for me. Bring back frequently to my remembrance the Promiſes and Supplications poured out in the Bitterneſs of my Soul, that thoſe ſucceſsful Addreſſes to the Throne of Grace, may ſtir me up effectually to the paying what I then ſo ſolemnly vowed. Open thou my Lips, *O Lord, that my Mouth* may declare thy Mercy and Truth as long as I live, *and* praiſe my God while I have any Being. *And, foraſmuch as this Recovery is only the Lengthening out a little that Span of Life, which muſt ſhortly have an End; Suffer me not, I pray thee, to forget, that* I am a Stranger upon Earth: *but help me ſo to diſengage my Heart from theſe Things here below, which, (my own late Experience hath taught me)* cannot profit in the Day of Wrath, *that my Hopes and Affections may be unal-* Pſal. civ. 33.

unalterably fixed upon thoſe better and eternal Treaſures, *which* thou haſt prepared for them that love thee. *Let the Thoughts and certain Expectation of Death and Judgment be, ſo conſtantly, ſo powerfully, preſent to my Soul; that in* what Hour ſoever my Lord ſhall come, *I may be found ready to meet him, and to* go in with him to the Marriage. *Even ſo, bleſſed Jeſus; Grant me in ſuch manner to* paſs through things temporal, that I finally loſe not the things eternal; *but that I may uſe and improve thy Grace here, till Grace at laſt be ſwallowed up in Glory, and I tranſlated to my Maſter's Joy. All which I beg for thy own Merit's ſake, my Only Mediator and Redeemer: To whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, from Me and every Creature, All Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, and humble Adoration, henceforth and for Evermore.* Amen.

Med. VI.

Of Death.

Hebr. ix. 27. *IT is Appointed for all Men once to Dye, and after that the Judgment:* So ſays the Spirit of God himſelf; and what is thus appointed, none can reverſe, none can eſcape. That then, which remains for Us, who lye under this Sentence, to do, is only to endeavour, that we may dye, as becomes Men and Chriſtians; that is, as Perſons, who ex-

2 Cor. v. 10. pect to render an Account of the Things done in this Body, and to receive a Recompence accordingly, whether it be Good or Bad. But Who may abide that Day? or who ſhall ſtand, when the Lord appeareth? Who indeed; when not only the Thing it ſelf, but the very Apprehenſions, and eſpecially the Approaches of it are ſo dreadful? For what is more ter-

terrible to mortal Man, than Dying? and what more ſo to ſinful Man, than being Judged? But yet, my Soul, ſince theſe muſt unavoidably come, let us ſee, what Courſe can be taken, to ſoften a little, and reconcile us to them: Nay, let us try, if it be not poſſible, not only to bear them contentedly, but even to meet them gladly.

II. If Death be conſidered in it ſelf, it is no more than what all the living Creation here below undergo in common with our ſelves. And what is Dying? It is a Ceaſing to Live after the manner we now do; it is a Removal, or rather an Eſcape; from a World of Misfortunes and Miſeries; of Sorrow and Diſquiet; of Malice and Deceit; of Noiſe and Contention; of Pains and Anguiſh; of Croſſes and Diſappoinments; of Vanity and Vexation: and, which is worſt of all, of Temptation and Sin. It is doing that once for all, which we have done in part a thouſand times already; by Sickneſſes and Faintings; by the Decays and Infirmities of Nature; and by the loſs of our tendereſt Relations, who tore away our very Heart with them. In ſhort, the preſent Life, even to the Proſperous, will be found upon a juſt Computation, to have made a very unequal Diſtribution. For even ſuch have a larger proportion of Trouble than of Happineſs. But to the Generality of Mankind it is a rough tempeſtuous Sea; and Death is the making their Port, or at laſt retiring into the Shelter of a Creek, where Storms can reach and annoy them no more. Theſe are not affected Strains of Philoſophy, but weighed and meaſured Truths; ſuch as every Man is, or may be, ſadly convinced of, at his own Expence. The only Deceit ariſes from our natural Fondneſs for Living; which God hath wiſely infuſed, and woven into our Souls, that we might ſuſtain our preſent Calamities the better. As on the other hand he hath made Faith of a Future State our Virtue; and ordained the

Miſe-

Miſeries of the Preſent Life as an Exerciſe for that Virtue; that both together might be a Balance at leaſt againſt the Objects of Senſe, and draw off our Affections from a Place, which was never intended for our Reſt; and to raiſe our Deſires of thoſe Better Things, provided for us in another World. And ſurely, if this Matter were well weigh'd, however timorous Nature may ſtart and boggle at firſt, yet it would be no hard Matter to come cloſe up to Death; and by the help of familiar Practice, and prudent pious Meditation, to render not only the Thoughts of it, but even the Thing it ſelf, very tolerable to us.

III. But if we conſider Death in another Capacity, as leading, and keeping us cloſe Priſoners, to a juſt and terrible Judgment, thus it hath a Sting indeed, which is the Senſe of Guilt, and Sin unpardoned. This is what nothing can relieve, but the Comforts of true Repentance, of a Saviour ſacrificed to expiate, and make full ſatisfaction for our Offences, a Title to our part in that Expiation, and the Favour of a reconciled God. And theſe, I hope, are Comforts which belong to Me. For do but hear and obſerve (my Soul) what reviving Words the Holy Spirit hath ſpoken to this purpoſe: *If any Man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous, and He is the Propitiation for our Sins.* Chriſt hath dyed, who is he that condemneth? Yea, Chriſt is riſen again and ſeated at the Right-hand of God, a perpetual Interceſſor, and a mighty Saviour to all them that come to God by Him. He hath told thee, that what the Infirmity of the Law and the Fleſh could not do, Chriſt hath done for us; that he knows and hath felt our Weakneſſes, and will not fail to make large and very gracious Allowances for them; that Jeſus hath waſhed us in his own Blood, and though our Sins be as Scarlet yet, upon our

1 John ii. 1, 2.

Rom. vii.

Heb. ii, & iv.

Rev. i. 5.
Iſai. i. 18.

our true Repentance they shall be white as Snow. Look up then, and see thy Lord coming in the Clouds; Thou must be judged, 'tis true, but thy Redeemer shall be thy Judge. And to whose Decision would'st thou choose to stand, but to thy best Friend's, to Him who loved thee so dearly, as to dye for Thee; to be made Sin and a Curse for Thee, that thou mightest be made the Righteousness of God in Him? This is thy sure Confidence, and Heaven and Earth may pass away, but his Merits and Promises can never fail. And he hath promised, that all who repent and believe, and serve and love him, shall be saved in that Day, and be where He is, to behold his Glory. Nay, not to behold only, but to enjoy it; to live, and reign, with the Son of God himself; For such he hath made Sons also, Heirs of God and Joynt-heirs with Christ, of an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in the Heavens. And if I know that I love God, I know that I shall be with him, and be like him, and see him as he is.

John xvii.

Rom. viii. 17.

1 *Pet.* i. 4.

1 *John* iii. 2.

IV. Oh glorious Day, which shall bring me to the full and inseparable Enjoyment of my dearest Saviour and most merciful God! when this Veil of Flesh shall be done away, and Spiritual Joy, and Peace, and Knowledge, and Love shall for ever abound! Blessed be thy Name, O God, who hast opened an Entrance into such Bliss for poor returning Sinners! Blessed be thy Bounty, who hast ordained such an infinite Recompence for our imperfect and unworthy Labours! And if thou hast decreed withal, that I must pass through the Regions of Darkness and Death, to come at those Seats of Light and Glory; shall I grudge this Passage? When I have born the Heat and Burden of the Day, shall I mourn because Even is come, and shrink back, when I am called to receive my Wages?

Some

Some Difficulties I know there are: But thou, O Lord, wilt ſtrengthen my Faith, and not ſuffer me to faint under the Terrours and Struggles of my laſt Tryals. Give me Grace, I pray thee, to conſider, that this is the Method by which thy own Son was made perfect; that it is no more, nay it is much leſs, than He ſuffered voluntarily, and for my ſake: that by ſuffering Death he hath overcome it, and rendred the Conflict more eaſie to them that come after. Grant me to rejoyce, at leaſt to ſupport my ſelf, with the nearer Proſpect of an Eternal Reſt and Reward.

V. And do thou, O my Soul, labour continually to ſtrengthen thy own Frailties and Fears, with holy Meditations, with the repeated Exerciſes of Faith, and Repentance, of Truſt and Love, and Heavenly-mindedneſs. Bid Adieu to this vain World, and ſhake Hands with it cheerfully: As for all that is uneaſie here, thank God for a Deliverance from it; And for all whom thou haſt reaſon to love and be concerned for, remember that thou leaveſt them under the Conduct of the ſame good Providence, of which thy ſelf haſt had ſo large Experience. Conſider that God is All Relations, and more than All, to thoſe that want them; and if they continue to ſeek and ſerve him diligently, he will never forſake them, but be their God, and their Guide unto Death. Bid all my Friends Weep, not for Me, but for Themſelves; who are ſtill in a State of Danger and Temptation, of Vanity and Miſery; from which they that dye in the Lord are for ever freed. Tell them, that we ſhall ſee one another again ſhortly. And, as I am going now to thoſe dear and good Souls, who have got the ſtart of me in this Journey; ſo They, and I, and all God's Children ſhall have a glorious, a joyful Meeting, at the Reſurrection of the Juſt. We ſhall all go together into a Place, whence Tears and Mourning are for ever baniſh'd; where the Viſion of God, the Ser-

vice

vice of the Lamb, the Company of Angels and Saints, ſhall miniſter eternal Matter of Praiſe and Joy; and our Happineſs will exceed all we can conceive, all we can hope for. And now, *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory?* 1 Cor. xv. 55. Thanks be to God, which hath given us the Victory, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore (my Soul) be thou ſtedfaſt, unmovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, for as much as I am aſſured, that my Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.

EJACULATIONS.

WHile I am at Home in the Body, I am abſent from the Lord; for I walk by Faith not by Sight; Therefore I am confident, and willing rather to be abſent from the Body, and to be preſent with the Lord. 2 Cor. v. 6. 7. 8.

Lord, Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth, that I deſire in compariſon of thee. Pſ. lxxiii. 25.

My Fleſh and my Heart faileth, but God is ſtill my Strength, and my Life, and my Portion for ever. 26.

Fearfulneſs and Trembling are come upon me, and an horrible Dread hath overwhelmed me. lv. 5.

For the Enemy of Souls crieth out aloud, and the ungodly One cometh on ſo faſt; he is minded to do me ſome Miſchief, ſo malicioufly is he ſet againſt me. But I am thine, O ſave me; I am bought with a Price, O Jeſus, even with thy moſt precious Blood. I am one of thy Sheep, rebuke this ravening Wolf, for thou art greater than he; and none is able to pluck me out of thy hand.

Thou that takeſt away the Sins of the World, have Mercy upon me. Thou that takeſt away the Sins of the World receive my Prayer; Thou Communion Service.

that

that ſitteſt at the right Hand of God, have Mercy upon me.

Pſal. ciii. 8. *Thou, Lord, art full of Compaſſion and Mercy,*
10. *Long-ſuffering and of great Goodneſs; O deal not with me after my Sins, nor reward me according to my Iniquities.*
14. *Thou knoweſt whereof we be made, and remembreſt that we are but Duſt. Look graciouſly therefore upon my Weakneſs; Pity the Interruptions and Imperfections of my Prayers; Pardon what I cannot now do with a ſteady and compoſed Zeal, and accept the Sincerity of my Heart.*

Burial Service. *Thou knoweſt, Lord, the Secrets of my Soul, ſhut not thy merciful Ears to my Prayers, but ſpare me, Lord, moſt holy, O God, moſt mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou moſt worthy Judge eternal, ſuffer me not at my laſt Hour for any Pains of Death to fall from thee.*

Heb. xiii. *Faithful is he that hath ſaid,* I will never leave thee nor forſake thee; *Lord, grant me the Know-*
Pſal. lvii. *ledge and ſenſible Experience of this moſt gracious*
1 Pet. v. 8. *Promiſe. Stand by me and ſave me from the Reproof of him that would eat me up. Deliver my Soul from the roaring Lion, who goeth about continually, ſeeking whom he may devour.*

1 Pet. iv. *Lord, I commit my Soul unto thee, as into the hands of a faithful Creator, and moſt merciful Re-*
Mal. iii. *deemer. Spare it, O God, and let it be thine in the Day when thou makeſt up thy Jewels. In the Hour*
Litany. *of Death, and in the Day of Judgment, good Lord, deliver me.*

Prayer.

O Almighty Lord, Father of Mercies and God of all Comfort, I flee unto thee for Succour in this my great Extremity; Moſt humbly beſeeching thee, to ſupport and ſtrengthen

then me in the laſt Conflict of my Life. Deliver me from the Snares and Terrors of the Wicked One, ſuſtain my Agonies with the peaceful Comforts of a quiet and good Conſcience, and of perfect Reconciliation with thee my God. Lord, as thou bringeſt me nearer to thy ſelf, ſo let my Love, and my Deſires of thee be ſtronger. And O that it may pleaſe thee in thy abundant Mercy, to afford me ſome ſweet Foretaſt of future Bliß, that I may triumph even in Death it ſelf! But if in this I know not what I ask; yet at leaſt ſuffer not my Faith to be ſhaken, nor thy loving Kindneß to fail; and however thou dealeſt with this corruptible Body, let my Soul, I implore thee, be precious in thy ſight. Waſh it in the Blood of the immaculate Lamb of God, that all its Pollutions being purged and done away, it may be preſented pure and without ſpot before thee, and be received into thy everlaſting Kingdom, through the Merits and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, thy only Son, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Short EJACULATIONS for the laſt Extremities.

I Believe, bleſſed Jeſus, that thou ſhalt come to be my Judge; I therefore pray thee help thy Servant, whom thou haſt redeemed with thy precious Blood. Te Deum.

O make me now to be numbred with thy Saints in Glory everlaſting.

The Snares of Death compaß me round about, and its Pains get hold upon me; Haſt thee, O God, to deliver me, make haſt, O Lord, to help me. Pſal. cxvi. lxx.

Thy Kingdom come, O God, Thy Will be done, in Earth as it is in Heaven.

Lord Jeſus, receive my Spirit.

Come, Lord Jeſus, come quickly.

Theſe laſt may be uſed by the Friends and Standers-by, with the neceſſary Alteration of the Perſon, after the ſick Party is diſabled from the uſe of them.

FINIS.

BOOKS *Publiſhed by* George Stanhope, *D. D. and Chaplain in Ordinary to his* MAJESTY.

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